

PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWS
REGARDING CREATIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWS REGARDING CREATIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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This research aimed at investigating pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views regarding creativity in early childhood education by determining similarities and/or differences among their views. The data of the study was gathered from 10 pre-service and 11 in-service teachers by asking their views about creativity in early childhood education. This study has been realized by the qualitative research method and the data was gathered through a type of interview, namely focus group technique. The seven basic interview questions developed by Aslan & Cansever (2009) for primary school teachers were rephrased considering early childhood education context. In the data analysis procedure, four basic themes were constituted: "teachers' views on creativity", "teachers' views on creative people", "teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education", and "teachers' views on the obstacles to

creativity in early childhood education". The results demonstrated that although every participant had their own creativity definitions, they agreed on some common ideas about creativity. The participants were aware of the value of creativity in preschool education and they stated that they prepare and implement creative activities to nurture children's creativity as well as stating that there are many obstacles to achieve this goal. They indicated that these obstacles are mostly based on school administrators, teachers, and parents. Moreover, it was concluded that the most striking difference between pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views was the fact that unlike in-service teachers, only the pre-service teachers gave some recommendations to tackle with the obstacles to children's creativity.

Keywords: Teachers' views, creativity, early childhood education, qualitative research

ÖZ

OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ VE OKUL ÖNCESİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ERKEN ÇOCUKLUK EĞİTİMİ DÖNEMİNDE YARATICILIK HAKKINDAKİ GÖRÜŞLERİ

Yılmaz, Simge

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Bu araştırmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının ve okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılık hakkındaki görüşlerini, bu görüşler arasındaki benzerlik ya da farklılıkları belirleyerek incelemektir. Çalışmanın verileri, 10 okul öncesi öğretmen adayının ve 11 okul öncesi öğretmenin eğitimde yaratıcılık ile ilgili görüşleri sorularak toplanmıştır. Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir ve veriler, bir görüşme çeşidi olan odak grup görüşmesi tekniği ile toplanmıştır. Aslan ve Cansever'in (2009) sınıf öğretmenleri için geliştirdikleri yedi temel görüşme sorusu, okul öncesi eğitim çerçevesi düşünülerek yeniden şekillendirilmiştir. Veri analizi sürecinde, dört temel tema oluşturulmuştur. Bu temalar; "öğretmenlerin yaratıcılık hakkındaki görüşleri", "öğretmenlerin yaratıcı birey hakkındaki görüşleri", "öğretmenlerin okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılığın önemi hakkındaki görüşleri" ve "öğretmenlerin yaratıcılık engelleri ile ilgili görüşleri" dir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına

göre, her bir katılımcının yaratıcılık konusunda kendi tanımları olsa da, katılımcıların bazı ortak düşüncelerde buluştukları görülmüştür. Katılımcılar, okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılığın önemini farkında olduklarını, çocukların yaratıcılıklarını geliştirecek aktiviteleri hazırlayıp uyguladıklarını; ancak, bu amaca ulaşmalarının önünde birçok engel olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılar; bu engellerin, çoğunlukla, okul yönetimi, öğretmen ve ebeveynlerden kaynaklandığını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, okul öncesi öğretmen adaylarının ve öğretmenlerin görüşleri arasındaki en çarpıcı farkın; çalışan öğretmenlerin aksine, yalnızca öğretmen adaylarının, yaratıcılığın önündeki engellerin üstesinden gelmesine yönelik önerilerde bulunması olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen görüşleri, yaratıcılık, okul öncesi eğitimi, nitel araştırma

I dedicate this work

To my father M. Nihat Yılmaz
who is the best father in the world,

To my mother Ayşe Yılmaz
who is the sweetest mother in the galaxy of milkyway,

To my sister Sinem Yılmaz
who is the other part of me,

To my grandmother Nurhan Üçok
who is my everything in the universe,

To my infinite, indispensable, and CREATIVE love Ümit Alkuş,

&

To all people whose creativities are killed one way or another.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Importance of Creativity

Producing new ideas or novel products is one of the essential characteristics of human beings (Ryhammar & Brodin, 1999). Creativity is one of these characteristics and it is a magical key for human beings to tackle with the challenges of the 21st century and to solve problems in daily life. Moreover, creativity is also a requirement for people who want to be successful in the age of science, communication and technology (Kampylis, Berki & Saariluoma, 2009; Noss & Pachler, 1999). In all communities, there is a need for creative people who could deal with difficult problems, comprehend the connections between past and present knowledge and understand the values of their own culture and those of other cultures (Duffy, 2006). Similarly, today, almost all sectors stream to encourage innovative and creative ideas from their employees so that they could gain satisfaction from their work (Craft, 2005).

Creativity is one of the issues discussed in all stages of education. In particular, in early childhood education, creativity is an essential part of the activities. Nurturing all of the developmental areas of children is the enduring goal of early childhood education. Therefore, promoting creativity as a developmental process is also one of the important targets of early childhood education (Craft, 2005; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000). Torrance (1964), one of the best known researchers of creativity issues, asserted that children reach the highest level of creativity at the age of four; therefore the early childhood years

could be regarded as the golden years of creativity since younger children are more creative. In comparison with to formal compulsory education where creativity is often restricted (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001), there are more opportunities to develop and support creativity in preschool education. For example, in the primary school years, they have fewer opportunities and less stimuli in terms of creativity (Eason, Giannangelo & Franceschini, 2009; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000). They are given excessive and unnecessary information which is why the expectations of teachers regarding children's educational success challenge the task of fostering creativity of children (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999). Therefore, it is vital to discover and foster creativity from the beginning of early childhood. Since a creative individual could more easily adapt to new situations easier and possesses flexible thinking, it is very important that young children, who are future scientists, musicians, artists, and problem solvers, to prepare themselves for life in a sophisticated manner (Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000). Furthermore, once creativity is initialized in a specific field in young children, it would be easier to transfer and implement this creativity into many other areas of life (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001). In fact, supporting creativity in young ages generates helpful consequences in the future. For instance, adults whose creativity was supported in the young age become aware of their creative abilities, strengths and weaknesses earlier than those whose creativity did not flourish. Besides, these individuals could gain abilities to make reasonable connections between their present and future lives, so they know who they are now and who they would be then (Prentice, 2000).

After realizing the importance of creativity, the question of when and how creativity issues have come into prominence could be asked. According to some authors, creativity was deeply understood in early Greek, Christian and Roman beliefs (Craft, 2002; Sternberg, 1999). Later, in the Romantic era, creativity was seen as art evidence and the source of inspiration by human (Craft, 2001). Indeed, the first thoughts related to creativity started at the end of the 19th century through the question of how creativity could be supported (Craft, 2001). In the literature, there are various studies related to creativity which have mainly been conducted in America and Britain in many disciplines such as education, sociology, physiology, philosophy, and business (Craft, 2001). Specifically, in terms of the subject areas of creativity, it is clear that the most of the researches particularly dealt music, art, technology and mathematics (Craft, 2001). However, after a closer glance to creativity researches, it could be concluded that the principal works began between the 1960s and 1970s. Further, the central target of those studies regarding creativity issues was mostly related to the assessment of creativity. It is seen that many researchers (Harvey, Hoffmeister, Coates, and White, 1970; Isaksen & Puccio, 1988; Sternberg, 1988) conducted their studies through the use of Torrance's creative thinking test to assess individuals' creative talents. Moreover, in the 1970s and 1980s, creativity works basically focused on school environment including pupils, teachers and young children. Certainly, the studies mostly investigated the personality characteristics of individuals (Smith & Carlsson, 1990; Anderson & Ryhammer, 1998). In the near past, researchers began to investigate implicit and explicit

theories of teaching in educational disciplines (Chan & Chan, 1999; Senga, Keung & Cheng, 2008; Runco & Johnson, 2002). Particularly, the systematic educational studies with regard to creativity began in the early twentieth century through the pioneering of Galton in 1869 (Craft, 2001). Those systematic studies were mostly based on educational approaches such as the psychoanalytic, cognitive, behaviorist and humanistic approaches. Overall, those researches aimed to assess creativity or nurture it by means of particular teaching approaches (Craft, 2001).

To proceed, it is essential to be familiar with the meaning of creativity and what being creative means. In reality, due to the lack of a universally excepted definition of creativity, its description changes from authority to authority (Craft, 2005; Kaufman, 2003; Sternberg, 1988). Grainger and Barnes (2006) described creativity as a process of playing ideas and possibilities. On the other hand, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) stated that creativity is a social system which is constituted as a result of an interaction between the people and the society that they live in. Additionally, as defined by Torrance (1977), creativity is the process of detecting a problem, developing possible solutions to handle it by forming, testing and evaluating the hypothesis and transmitting the information to the others. Alternatively, Perkins (1988) defined creativity as focusing on creative product, which is defined as novel and appropriate outcome (Lubart, 2000; Perkins, 1988; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996), and creative person, who always creates original products (Perkins, 1988). Furthermore, Mumford & Gustafson (1988) explained creativity as being associated with exhibiting products based on the

environment factor. Likewise, MacKinnon (1962) stated that creativity is one of the special personality characteristics which appear as a reaction under some circumstances. Else, Bartlett (1958) associated creativity with being open to new experience and peculiar circumstances whereas Çellek (2002) defined creativity as making analyze and suggesting a new proposal and evoking to be strange and novel or thinking out of the box. Differently in terms of approach but similarly in the case of deduction to Bartlett (1958), Çellek (2002), and San (1979) defined creativity as combining cognitive abilities with feelings and imagination to generate something new. In a different manner, Mott (1973) explained creativity as developing the abilities which are unclosed or obviously observed by anyone. Moreover, again Torrance (1962) expanded that if anyone is sensitive to problems around his/her, s/he could try to find a variety of ideas to solve it, test if the solutions work, and determine which solution is valid to deal with the problem, then creativity will emerge. Most suitably to this research, creativity is a sort of an imaginative process that results in original and valuable consequences (Robinson, 2001).

In the light of the above information, it is clear that there are many definitions which differ with respect to interpretation and concentration on different components of creativity and creative people (Barron & Harrington, 1981). As a natural result, this richness in the definitions leads us to remember various approaches such as cognitive, behaviorist and humanistic approaches defined by different theorists (Spiel & Von Korff, 1998). Those approaches would be analyzed in the next chapter in detail.

Upon describing the necessities of being creative extracted from the above definitions thereof, it is clear that creativity requires to have many characteristics such as curiosity, deep thinking, being natural, risk taking, openness to new ideas, being critical and practical (Chi Lau, 2006; Glover & Gary, 1976; Harvey, Hoffmeiste, Coates & White, 1970; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000; Ramey & Piper, 1974; Runco, 2001; Trevlas, Matsouka, & Zachopoulou, 2003; Öztürk, 2004; Woodman and et al, 1993). In the modern world, people having those characteristics are frequently encountered anytime and anywhere (Sternberg, 1999). In fact, individuals' personal works such as "a discovery of a new recipe" or "an original design of a toy" could be perceived as a creative effort by many authors (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001; Grainger & Barnes, 2006; Öztürk, 2004; Sawyer, Stainer and et al, 2003; Smolucha, 1992).

When creativity is deeply analyzed, it could be mentioned that, there are two types of creativity; namely, cultural creativity and personal creativity (Fritsch & Rusakova, 2010). The reason of this separation could be explained by the fact that creativity is a necessity for both social and cultural development (Sternberg, 1999). Primarily, when creativity introduces or brings unprecedented things into existence which has great impact on society, it could be considered as a cultural creativity. Einstein, Graham, and Gandhi are the examples of cultural creativity since they affected cultures with their extraordinary innovations and unconventional ideas. On the other hand, if a creative activity brings out something that has never been done before by anyone, it could be referred to as personal creativity (Isbell &

Raines, 2007). In this type of creativity, situations, experiences, and practices are personally evaluated in a meaningful manner or in a novel way (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007). Each individual has his/her own personal creativity. In general, someone who creates something which makes his/her daily life easier could be considered as a creative person. In addition, individuals who have creative abilities could be perceived as problem solvers because they could deal with problems on their own (Isbell & Raines, 2007). Personal creativity could also be encountered in educational area since anyone could solve a problem in a different and meaningful way in educational settings (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2009). Along these lines, personal creativity could be seen as a first step to cultural creativity. In fact, it is known that if individuals' personal creativity is supported by giving them various opportunities from the beginning of the very young age, they will be both personally and culturally creative individuals in their present lives and future (Lassing, 2009; Liu, 2000).

As it is understood from the above discussion, creativity, whose various dimensions are investigated in different fields, is one of the desired characteristics to accommodate today's world and it should begin to be promoted in early years via early childhood education (Craft, 2005; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000). Here, the important role of early childhood educators comes into prominence since their significant role to nurture children's creativity could not be ignored (Kampylis, 2010; Kowalsky, 1997).

Especially, teachers' views are important and have an impact on children's development since they try to implement the national curriculum and educational programs in their

classroom settings (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999). Therefore, they own a critical role to create stimulating classroom and educational context for children regarding creativity (Chien & Hui, 2010). Teachers have the capability of nurturing creativity in the classroom by detecting children's creative potentials, creative products as well as preparing classroom atmosphere to increase children's creativity without any specific training programs (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999). As a result, preschool teachers are so important individuals that they could facilitate their children's creativity based on their beliefs and attitudes towards creativity (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Teachers' responsibilities in fostering young children's creativity are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Studying with pre-service and in-service preschool teachers to comprehend their views about creativity is important (Runco & Johnson, 2002) since they play a vital role in children's development (Nickerson, 1999). Hence, the overall aim of this research was to examine a group of pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity in preschool education. In order to understand pre-service and in-service teachers' views concerning creativity, the following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity?
2. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creative people?
3. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood

teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education?

4. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education?

1.3. The Significance of the Study

In today's rapidly changing world, there is a need for creative individuals who are creative thinkers, problem solvers, and have independent personalities in many areas (Gürgen, 2006). In recent years, as far as the situation regarding creativity issues in Turkey is concerned, there has been intense interest to conduct studies aiming to explore ways to support creative people's development. In fact, dysfunctional educational programs have been rearranged regarding the extent to which children's creativity should be promoted in educational environment (Gürgen, 2006). In the literature, while some of the studies have been focused on individual characteristics of creative people (Dawson, D'Andrea, Affinito, & Westby, 1999; Rudowicz & Yue, 2002; Russ, 1996; Scott, 1965; Scott, 1999), some others, have investigated effectiveness of traditional and creative methods in enhancing children's creativity (Demirci, 2007; Karapınarlı, 2007; Laius ve Rannikmae, 2005). There are also a lot of studies about the nature of creativity in the foreign literature sources. Due to the fact that teachers are the key mentors to support desirable skills in children (Gürgen, 2006) researchers selected them as a target group in most of those studies.

However, there have been little studies conducted in the academic research pool regarding the views of teachers

associated with creativity (Kampylis, 2010). Considering the gap in the literature, the present study was conducted to find out the pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views related to early childhood education. In fact, there is no similar research investigating the same characteristics of creativity in the framework of early childhood education in Turkey. In fact, the current study results would provide a variety of learning opportunities for teachers by drawing attention to some questions in terms of what teachers know and credit regarding creativity in early childhood education, what they know about the characteristics of creative individuals, what they think about the importance of creativity in young children's education and what they think about the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education. Additionally, this study would extend participants' point of views by drawing their attentions to the relationship between creativity and rote learning, the effects of socialization process considering parents and teachers of children on creativity of children and the school administrators' roles on the obstacles of children's creativity.

The assumption that creativity could be taught has long-term and quite exciting implications for both teachers and students. The former might be encouraged to broaden their horizons and outlook on teaching creativity by numerous books, articles, seminars, and conferences on creativity all over the world; in the meantime, the latter might find inspiration in the idea that creativity could be learned through a wide range of methods including interaction with a teacher who is motivated and enthusiastic enough to read relevant materials and regularly participate in seminars and conferences on fostering creativity.

In fact, participation in these kind of seminars means that the participants thereof are deeply interested in active engagement in developing creativity in children, which makes them ideal candidates to support those learners who are willing to learn how to be creative. In addition to this, the very existence of multitude of available sources on the subject might bring an end to the debate regarding whether creativity is the subject of genetics or education by means of the obvious answer: Creativity could be taught by conscious teacher or researcher. However, the unfortunate fact that the inadequate numbers of the related visual, auditory, and written sources are available in Turkish alienates Turkish people from both active learning and conscious teaching of creativity. Significance of the present study might lay in the fact that it discovers significant clues about Turkish pre-service and in-service teacher's views on creativity.

Moreover, by providing significant knowledge about pre-service and in-service preschool teacher's views and experiences related to creativity, this research also sheds new light on the role of educational authorities, such as researchers, school administrators, policy makers and practitioners.

As far as implications of this study are concerned, while preschool teachers might have a chance to enhance their practices in educational settings in order to develop children's creativity at a higher level of awareness, preschool prospective teachers might be able to promote their professional development through this study.

In addition, teachers, school administrators and parents might focus on the meaning of creativity through the result of this study. They might quest their level of creative thinking skills.

All three groups of people might realize that they should increase their own creativity through variety of activities before they attempt to enhance children's. In fact, they might focus on which activities improve their creative thinking skills.

Lastly, the main significance of this study is that teachers have an opportunity to affect individuals around them. To begin with, they have an impact on children in their educational settings since they spend most of their time with children during the day. Next, teachers have chance to communicate with parents; therefore they might be a good guide for them concerning children's creativity if they have adequate knowledge about creativity and its importance. Besides, since they breathe the same atmosphere with school administrators, teachers might positively affect them to prepare stimulating environment to support children's creativity. As a result, teachers' level of knowledge about creativity is very important factor in terms of growing creative generations which might give rise to creative society in the future.

1.4. Definition of Important Terms

The definition of the following terms is necessary to better understand this study:

Creativity: "Creativity is an 'Imaginative processes with outcomes that are original and of value" (Robinson, 2001, p.118).

Creative People: Creative people are the people who have such characteristics as curiosity, deep thinking, being natural, risk taking, openness to new ideas, being critical and practical (Chi Lau, 2006; Glover & Gary, 1976; Harvey, Hoffmeiste, Coates & White, 1970; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000; Ramey &

Piper, 1974; Runco, 2001; Trevlas, Matsouka, & Zachopoulou, 2003; Öztürk, 2004; Woodman and et al, 1993).

Teachers' conception: The word *conception* has been used by some researchers (e.g., Lloyd & Wilson, 1998; Thompson, 1992) as a general category containing constructs such as beliefs, knowledge, understanding, preferences, meanings, and views. In this study, "*teachers' views*" is used in this manner.

Early childhood education: Early childhood education is an education that is intentionally planned to impress on children regarding their development from birth to the beginning of the primary education (Katz, 1970).

Preschool pre-service teachers: Preschool pre-service teachers are individuals who are enrolled in the four year undergraduate teacher education program to gain a status as a teacher in public or private early childhood education centers.

Preschool in-service teachers: Preschool in-service teachers are individuals who are continuing his/her job as a teacher in public or private early childhood education centers.

Public and private school: Public and private schools are defined as the schools whose activities are supervised by The Ministry of National Education. These types of schools could be instituted by both a person and a state (Basic Ministry Education Law, Law Number: 1739).

1.5. Assumptions and Limitations

1.5.1. Assumptions

Participant teachers in the current study were assumed to respond the interview questions sincerely. In addition, the qualitative data collection instrument in this study, which was

interview forms, was also assumed to enhance views of the participants about creativity.

1.5.2. Limitations

The main limitation of the current study was the fact that the instrument was merely applied to 21 participants. Hence, the number of the participants might be increased to enrich the data. The next limitation was that only one data gathering technique namely focus group interview was used in the data collecting procedure. Class observations could have been done to see the participants' real practices in classroom settings. The last limitation of the study was that because of the fact that all participants were Turkish pre-service and in-service preschool teachers; the consequences of this study could be restricted to the Turkish educational system and culture regarding creativity.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes three main parts. The first part aims to give information about theories that are valuable to understand an importance of creativity in young children's development. In the second part, dimensions of creativity such as creativity as a product, creativity as a process, the creative environment and the creative person are examined. In the creative environment section, the role of teachers, school administrators and parents on children's creativity are explained. In the last part, related studies in the literature are included.

2.1. Theories of Children's Learning Regarding Creativity

Since theories enhance comprehension of why and how creativity should be fostered, in this part of the research constructivist theory, social constructivist theory, multiple intelligence theory, structure of intelligence theory, psychoanalytic theory, behaviorist theory, and humanistic theory are discussed in association with creativity. Furthermore, since teachers' pedagogical preferences (e.g. constructivist theory, humanistic theory, or behaviorist theory) are mostly associated with their perceptions, ideas, views, beliefs, and attitudes, (Mohamad, 2006; Dupagne & Krendl, 1992), the aim is to understand the relationship between creativity and each theory above to shed light on the current study.

As it was mentioned before, the systematic educational studies related to creativity and its effects on young children regarding all approaches mentioned above began in the early

twentieth century (Craft, 2001). In this part, each theory is analyzed considering creativity in education.

Firstly, constructivist theory, which is suggested by Jean Piaget (1960), concentrates on the cognitive development of individuals. According to this theory, children's intellectual development is affected by their life experiences (Carew & Clarke-Stewart, 1980). Moreover, an individual constitutes his/her own knowledge based on his/her previous experience (Spodek & Saracho, 1987). When learning is defined in the framework of constructivist theory, it could be said that it is a process which is open to discovering, experimenting and manipulating materials in the environment. Learning is also achieved the extent to which having problems as well as solutions to deal with them in the same context (Karmiloff-Smith & Inhelder, 1974). Therefore, it is understood that this theory is closely associated with the creative thinking (Tan, 2007). Furthermore, children are active participants in the process of building their own meaningful knowledge (Isbell & Raines, 2007) as well as first-hand problem solvers who learn by gaining experiences in constructivist theory (Beetlestone, 1998). Considering Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation, it is understood that children's prior knowledge helps them understand the new concepts in their environment. Indeed, according to these concepts, children are active explorers of their environment. As a result, creative outcomes are products of interplay between assimilation and accommodation (Cropley, 2001). Furthermore, Piaget's developmental stages help us to understand that creative process is a continuing process and one stage could not be

advanced without continuing earlier one of these hierarchical stages. Children are expected to think creatively when they move into the Piaget's last stage namely abstract thinking stage (Cropley, 1997). As a result, creative abilities manifest in the middle age. Indeed, when it comes to adulthood, individuals' behaviors are more intentioned and their abstract thinking is more developed when compared with childhood years (Starko, 2005).

Another theory giving importance to creativity is Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. In this theory, Vygotsky emphasizes that the more interaction with each other children have, the more meaningful their learning would be. According to the social constructivist theory, the most appropriate social environment that promotes children's interaction with each other is their play environment (Vygotsky, 1962). Moreover, this theory suggests Vygotsky's famous concept of zone of proximal development. According to this concept, children's real developmental level and their potential developmental level differ from each other. Promoting children's collaborative works move their existing developmental level closer to their potential developmental level (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Children's social interactions with both their peers and adults around them during projects offer them more creative opportunities than their individual work (Isbell & Rainess, 2007).

Multiple intelligence theory postulated by Howard Gardner also emphasizes the significance of creativity. In this theory, Gardner mentioned that there are nine different types of intelligence of individuals which emphasize different aspects of creative thinking (Gardner, 1993).

Joy Paul Guilford, who is one of the prominent names in the field of cognitive approach, stresses the significance of divergent thinking (Guilford, 1966). Guilford was particularly interested in the assessment of creativity and its relation with such attributes as flexibility, fluency, and elaboration (Guilford, 1966; Massialas & Zevin, 1967).

The next key figure who emphasized different aspects of being creative was Freud, the founder of psychoanalytic theory. According to him, creativity is the outcome of the subliminal conflict between id, the urges of humanity's basic needs and superego and social conscience (Freud, 1964). Freud stresses that the creativity in adulthood regarding the work of art is mostly associated with children's play experience in childhood (Freud, 1964).

The behaviorist theory, on the other hand, deals with the observable activities of people instead of focusing on consideration of the cognitive process behind a certain behavior. In this approach, learning is achieved through an interaction with one's environment (Hill, 1977). Furthermore, philosophers whose ideas are included in behaviorist theory, support the idea of creativity to the extent which reinforcement is being used (Dupagne & Krendl, 1992; Hill, 1977). In fact, if a young child is rewarded in a creative environment, s/he will focus more intentionally on his/her work and will be more creative. Moreover, if an individual develops his/her strategy to cope with a problem and is praised by people around him/her, then such an individual could have a tendency to do one's best (Sarsani, 2005). One of the best known names of the behaviorist theory is Skinner. He supports the concept that children's creativity is

based on his genetic history and previous environmental experiences (Skinner, 1971). However, there is a problem in this theory that challenge with creativity in terms of children are passive learners in the learning environment (Dupagne & Krendl, 1992; Hill, 1977).

Humanistic theory with its theorists Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1968) stresses that creativity is not a special genius for some individuals; in fact, it could be seen in every individual. According to this theory, Rogers and Maslow mention the model of psychologically safe environment and its value for young children's development. According to these philosophers, this kind of environment offers atmosphere of freedom for children to think creatively. Moreover, children's individual interests are considered in such an environment. Children could take some risks in this type of environment as well as discover interesting objects or materials without fear of disapproval. As a result, psychologically safe environment is one of the essential prerequisites to achieving nurturing children's creativity in this approach (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961). According to the Maslow, if people reach their highest level of self-actualizing, they have an ability to make creative works. Additionally, these types of individuals have some distinctive personality characteristics such as being practical, natural, communicative, and independent (Maslow, 1968). On the other hand, Rogers (1961) emphasizes that creativity is one of the indicators of one's healthy development. In addition, scientists (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976) stress that all individuals have an inclination to reach their own potential. Similar to Maslow, Rogers also defined some characteristics of creative individuals. According to him,

having three particular personality characteristics naturally enhance promotion of creativity. According to him, the first characteristic of creative people is being open to a new experience which is outside the conventional norms. The second characteristic of these individuals is a capability of making self-evaluation. The last characteristic of creative individuals is having an ability to play with ideas, to make different integration, and to make good generalization (Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976).

Consequently, when we associate creativity with those theories, it could be said that almost all theories promote creativity. However, as far as this research is concerned, the most appropriate theory, on which the researcher based her study, is constructivist theory since in constructivist classroom settings, teachers allow children to form their own thinking. In fact, teachers address creativity by giving opportunities to children to create their own specific learning. While doing this, constructivist teachers consider children's intrinsic motivation and their background information based on their learning experiences (Dupagne & Krendl, 1992). After mentioning the importance of creativity in above theories, creativity in education could be analyzed more deeply now.

2.2. The Dimensions of Creativity

Although creativity is considered as a process (Ryhammar & Brolin, 1999), it also includes product, person and environment in daily life and academic area (Taylor, 1988). All these are accepted as the dimensions of creativity in the literature (Isbell & Raines, 2007).

2.2.1. Creativity as a Product

In the creativity framework, the productivity means producing something unique by an individual or a group of individuals (Isbell & Raines, 2007). According to Russ (1993), in general, there are two expected criteria of a creative product, one being newness and the other one aesthetic appreciation. Furthermore, Rothenberg (1990) emphasized the importance of originality of products rather than the number of products. In addition, according to him, if anyone produces something which is both new and valuable, his/her output will be definitely creative (Rothenberg, 1990). In reality, the value of something changes from person to person; for instance, both an artist's painting and a child's painting could be mentioned as a creative product (Browski, 2002).

Focusing on the end product of children's work in the very beginning of their life might limit their creativity because young children might ignore their end products in this period. In fact, they mostly concentrate on the process of their creation. To illustrate, the process of mixing colors is more enjoyable for them than the color that they reach at the end (Isbell & Raines, 2007). On the other hand, while the process of children's activities is more valuable than its products in the early ages (Moyles, 1989), children begin to value their products rather than the process of their work in the primary school years since in these years, most children want to express their feelings and ideas more realistically (Isbell & Raines, 2007). Therefore, teachers and parents should be careful and consider children's developmental stages as well as their individual strengths and interests while comparing, assessing and praising children's

works. They should always consider that misuse of assessment, reward and competition could suppress children's creative potential (Amabile, 1989).

2.2.2. Creativity as a Process

The creative process means using creative techniques and procedures during a creative activity. Creative process could be very valuable even without any end product (Schirrmacher, 2006) since in this process individuals produce many ideas and strategies for their work. Especially young children frequently could not reach the end of their creative work. In fact, they are mostly interested in discovering the physical characteristics or functions of their materials used in the activities (Isbell & Raines, 2007).

Many authors claimed that there are some steps of creative process to comprehend individuals' creativity. To demonstrate, Wallas (1926) developed the traditional model which has four steps such as preparation, incubation, illumination and verification in the creativity process. In the first step, problem is searched and the necessary sources are explored to collect the information. In the second step, which is the most important stage among the four, individuals are interested in different activities which are unrelated to the problem. Then, in the third stage, suddenly the most useful idea comes to mind to solve the problem. In the last stage, the solution is checked as to whether or not it works in practice.

Torrance (1969) determined that there are four constituents of the creative process. The first component is originality that represents uniqueness of the idea. The second component is fluency which emphasizes the production of a variety of ideas

focusing on their quantity. The next component is flexibility. It is the capability of thinking in a different way or looking from a different perspective. The last component is elaboration which deals with the extending of the idea to make it more complicated. It is clear that Torrance was inspired by Dewey's (1920) model of problem solving since in this model, firstly a problem is perceived, and then the problem is defined. Later, solutions to the problems are generated and the best solution to deal with the problem is selected.

There is also a little bit different method, namely the Creative Problem Solving method, which is originally developed by Osborn (1963) to understand the creative processes both theoretically and practically. In fact, in this model, firstly, problem is understood. Then, the ideas are produced and the action is planned. In this model, the essential target is to produce variety of ideas by emphasizing the importance of divergent thinking which gives an opportunity to think in many ways.

2.2.3. The Creative Environment

The valuable views about creative process could be achieved and numerous benefits could be reached through the appropriate environment which is prepared due to the help of teachers, parents and school administrators.

2.2.3.1. The Role of Teacher

Creativity could be nurtured or restricted from the beginning of early ages based on the effects of individual's social, cultural and educational environment (Ayan & Dündar, 2009). When creativity is linked to a chain, the most powerful chain rings

would be school and family (Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000). In that case, it could be said that both teachers and parents have very significant roles in promotion or hampering children's creativity (Ayan, S & Dündar, 2009). If there is a good connection between school and family, children's creative thinking could be enhanced (Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000).

However, connection between these two is not always good. In fact, unfortunately, it is not the same in practice as in the theory because there could be some deterioration in the chain. The reason of this disruption might be related to some social, environmental, cultural and educational differences between children (Craft, 2003). Disconnections among these might negatively affect young children's creativity from the beginning of the early years throughout their university life in their educational process. Particularly, early childhood educators cause to inhibit children's creativity by not giving importance to the children's opinions, not being flexible as to children's wrong behavior, and not thinking that there might be variety of correct answers to any question (Dababneh, Ihmeideh, & Al-Omari, 2010). Moreover, starting in the beginning of the formal education years, if limited stimulus and opportunities are given to children, their creativity might be restricted by teachers (Eason, Giannangelo & Franceschini, 2009; Kemple & Nissenberg, 2000).

All the same, although teachers are aware of the significance of creativity, they might bring about growing up noncreative generations. The reason for this is that teachers might have insufficient knowledge to carry over their knowledge and conscious about the critical value of creativity to children

(Fleith, 2000). On this issue, specifically Bolden, Harries & Newton (2010) conducted a study with teacher candidates and they concluded that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge to nurture children's creativity because of not having effective information concerning creativity during their university education. In addition, they indicated that teachers could not support children's creativity in some areas in early childhood setting, especially in activities which are related with mathematics. Another reason of the failure of nurturing creativity is that many teachers do not understand the value of process of any work. They merely focus on a particular task and the end result of the process. While doing this, they support rote learning which is not a meaningful method for children as well as learning with play (Beetlestone, 1998).

Although it's reported that teachers have lack of preparation to promote children's creativity, they are still the ones who first come to one's mind when one thinks of the ways to support children's creativity. (Torrance, 1962; White, 1968). Teachers are the key individuals to create appropriate environment for children to display and develop their creativity in educational settings (Cropley, 1997) since they spend most of their time with children in schools.

Teachers, however, might consider many things while assuming this important task. In fact, children need to gain new skills for problem solving, critical thinking, and new knowledge to sustain themselves during their life. Indeed, they are expected to meet many social and technological demands. The mission of early childhood educators is very crucial at this point (White, 1968). They might adopt special teaching techniques which

encourage children's natural curiosity to learn and to discover as well as their problem solving skills (Beetlestone, 1998). Rather than trying to create a disciplinary atmosphere and sustain the particular order in their own classrooms, teachers might be tolerant and supportive of many characteristics of creative behaviors such as risk taking, independence and impulsivity (Kampylis, Berke, & Saariluoma, 2009). To be able to support young children's creativity, they might prepare or specify curricula and educational programs. There is no standard curriculum to facilitate the creativity of children; therefore, teachers might use their ability to enhance children's creativity by encouraging children's hidden skills and, also, by keeping an eye on children's individual differences by limiting comparisons among children (Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999; Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001). In addition, teachers might realize the importance of effective teaching methods to establish a creative collaboration atmosphere in classroom settings (Sawyer, 2004). In fact, if they use all their potentials considering creativity and always try to find new methods to support children, creativity of children will follow inevitably. While doing this, teachers might consider active participation of children in activities in classroom settings in which wide range of materials is provided for them (Isbell & Raines, 2007; Kuhaneck, Spitzer & Miller, 2010; Prentice, 2000). Moreover, while teachers have to be aware of children's creative potentials (Runco, 2008), they might also be aware of their own abilities. They are never afraid of making mistakes in front of children (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001). Also, in school settings, they might not emphasize the significance of avoiding mistakes and might try to avoid stressing

the importance of being perfect. They might consider that in this kind of settings, children, especially young ones, might prefer to avoid sharing their original ideas. Especially, in early childhood years children are open to risky and wrong behaviors that are labeled misbehaviors in the society. Therefore, teachers' good guidance to these kinds of behaviors and feedback might strength children's creativity. In this way, children could understand that making a mistake is not a wrong thing and s/he might share her/his ideas with anyone or could express her/his opinions to peers or other people. Also, s/he might understand that whatever s/he asks to her/his teacher would be correctly answered (Beghetto, 2006; Beghetto, 2007). In addition, they might consider the effectiveness of learning by hands-on experiences in the learning process (Chien & Hui, 2010). Teachers might provide opportunities to children to reach the right information on their own (Sawyer, Steiner, Moran, Sternberg, Feldman, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Furthermore, teachers might be attentive to any of the responses to questions in classroom settings because they believe that supporting not only children's true but also their false responses might increase their active participation (Beghetto, 2006). Last but not least, teachers might be creative since the more the creative capacity of the teachers increases, the more the number of creative children who are able to think independently becomes (O' Rourke, 2005).

2.2.3.2. The Role of School Administrator

Another critical role in supporting creativity belongs to school administrator since teacher and school administrator could be regarded as the two halves of an apple in the role of

promoting pupils' creativity. Indeed, good communication between management and employee staff is very important regarding children's creativity (Parham, 1988). According to Töremen (2003) school administrators might pay attention to some key points to constitute a creative environment in school. For instance, they might eliminate very strict rules for both students and employees by creating democratic environment, and encouraging their employees to reveal their ideas. Moreover, they might be forgiving regarding both students' and teachers' misbehaviors. In addition, school administrators might be absolute supporters of innovative ideas. They might provide sufficient support to promote creativity of children (Rawlinson, 1995; Torrance, 1987; Yıldırım, 2002). In essence, they have a key role in supporting children's creativity by giving advice to parents about how not to make any criticism of children's opinions. Moreover, they might become a guide to the parents by emphasizing the importance of children's expressions of themselves freely. They might warn parents about not laughing at their children's mistakes. They might encourage children to discover something via provoking their creative thinking (Torrance 1962). School leaders also might identify and strengthen both students' and teachers' creativity since they have an opportunity to enhance some funding for creative works. They have the responsibility to enrich the educational environments for the benefit of teachers and children. They might be good role models for teachers and children (Morris, 2006).

2.2.3.3. The Role of Parents

While it is inevitable to see the importance of the teachers' and school administrators' roles in developing children's creativity, parents are also a very important part of the developing process of children's creativity. In fact, parents might help to flourish their child's creativity and imagination by maintaining the consistent behaviors with the teacher (Singh, 1987; Hunt, & Paraskevopoulos, 1980). Furthermore, they might consider that if children are raised in a tolerant home environment, their creative development will be facilitated. In addition, they might take into consideration that if children are expected to signify themselves and are given an opportunity to take some risks in a safe and familiar environment, their creativity will flourish (Ekvall, 1999). Moreover, parents might be a part of children's creative process without any intervention into their creative or imaginative work. They might always have a good interaction with their children to develop their creativity and imagination since children's learning outputs and creative works are meaningful the extent to which parents communicate with children, share their opinions through rendering their interpretations (Duffy, 2006). One of the best ways for parents to foster children's creativity is supervising instead of interfering once rich environment including appropriate materials is established for children to use (Duffy, 2006). Furthermore, parent involvement into children's educational settings is important to develop children's creativity. In this regard, if parents who have novel skills as actors, artists, or musicians are invited to the classroom, children's creativity will be prompted (Beetlestone, 1998).

2.2.4. The Creative Person

In the literature, it is stated that people have general idea of characteristics of a creative person (such as being imaginative or energetic) without looking for his/her cultural background (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995; Schubert, 1998). Many researchers, however, denied this idea in their studies. In fact, numerous researches which are mostly conducted with students or adults have investigated the creative people's characteristics in variety of cultural settings (such as United States, Britain, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, China, Korea, Singapore, India, Romania, and other cultures) (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006; Montgomery, Bull, & Baloch, 1993; Ohuche, 1986; Rudowicz, 2003). Most of the studies conducted in different locations have some similar cognitive (e.g., playing with ideas, making generalization, thinking flexibly), personality (e.g., being independent, having self-confidence, being social) and motivational traits (e.g., being active, competitive and enthusiastic) of creative individuals (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006; Rudowicz, 2003).

Although each culture has some common core characteristics, they might also have the specific characteristics. To demonstrate, in African culture, the most valuable personality characteristics is desire to be much better than others. Moreover, being honest, being dutiful, being polite, being healthy, being kind and having self-confidence are the prior desirable characteristics of individuals in the African culture. Nevertheless, some different characteristics of people might be observed in the same cultural context. For example, being healthy is an important characteristic that students have. In fact, due to the

lack of medical support for people, many of them suffer from a variety of diseases (Ohuche, 1986).

Apart from African culture, in American culture, the core characteristics of creative individuals are being active, shrewd, clever, independent, novel, and motivated as well as having high energy, curiosity, and self-confidence, (Barron & Harrington, 1981). Similarly, again in the same culture, Montgomery et. al. (1993) found that creative individuals have high imagination skills, openness to new life experience, high curiosity and grasp, independence, innovativeness, are sentient and tolerant of obscurity.

On the other hand, in Chinese culture, the situation is different from the American culture because for them it is important to enhance social harmony. Moreover, being independent is not supported in their social system (Dunn, Zhang, & Ripple, 1988). Hence, they give importance to being obedient and responsible as well as to having asceticism and responsibility (Yang, 1990). In addition, in this cultural context, sense of humor and aesthetic orientation are not the characteristics of creative people, which is different from American culture (Rudowicz, 2003). However, there are some variations about the features of creative individuals even within the same culture. To illustrate, the characteristic of enjoying life is merely special one of the cultural group in China (Rudowicz & Yue, 2000).

In Korean culture, on the other hand, cognitive characteristics of creative people come into prominence rather than personality or motivational traits (Lim & Pucker, 2001).

Considering Turkish culture, on the other hand, the characteristics of creative children are self-confidence, original thinking, being extraordinary, critical to rules or norms, curious and independent, liking loneliness and developing empathy (Arık, 1987; Sungur, 1999).

As it is understood from the above discussion, although there are many cultural-specific studies related to the features of creative children, there are also many researches which are conducted with teachers considering children's characteristics in the classroom settings (Bachtold, 1974; Dawson, 1997; Feldhusen & Treffinger, 1975; Lau, 1986; Scott, 1999; Torrance, 1965). In fact, these researches reflect teachers' conceptions about creative children in the school environment.

To demonstrate, teachers might have negative perceptions about creative children (Scott, 1999). In fact, although teachers value children's creative characteristics in their reports, in practice they do not value those characteristics (Dawson, 1997; Feldhusen & Treffinger, 1975; Lau, 1986). Westby and Dawson (1995) studied fifty one participants, thirty five of whom were collage students and sixteen of whom were elementary teachers, in order to find out their views about prototypical characteristics of creative children. They wanted teachers to rate their most and least favorite pupils through the twenty items checklist which had ten most important and ten least important characteristics of children. According to the results of their study, students who have the creative characteristics are unflavored by teachers. Indeed, although there was positive correlation between participants' views about creativity and least favorite students,

there was negative correlation between their views about creativity and most favorite students.

Similarly, Bachtold (1974) noticed that teachers do not appreciate traits related to creativity; hence, they disfavor children whose characteristics are associated with creativity. The literature sources display contradiction as to the reason of this situation. For example, in Torrance's study (1965), teachers who believe in the significance of creativity in educational settings gave the right answers instead of their own ideas about the traits of creative children. In this field, there is a study conducted by Myers and Torrance (1961). The result of this study indicates that although a group of teachers' self-reports show that they reward creative behavior of children, in reality they penalize those types of behavior.

On the other hand, some researches state teachers' thoughts about creative children in general. In reality, there are many long lists related to the characteristics of creative children in the literature. For instance, according to many researches (such as Rawlinson, 1995; Torrance, 1987; Yıldırım, 2002), a creative individual is able to criticize the authorities if necessary. In addition, children might disregard or break the rules of the school management system if they are not meaningful to them since naturally being creative signifies breaking the forced rules or existing norms. In fact, creative children have tendency to be disruptive and negligent to the limitations (Lau & Li, 1996). Supporting this research, Oral & Guncer (1993) conducted a study with teachers regarding their classroom experiences; they reported that creative children do not obey the school rules. In fact, teachers reported that aggression and delinquency in

behaviors are seen in more creative children rather than in less creative children. Moreover, creative children are very curious, independent, innovative, adventurous and active. Furthermore, young children might be called creative thinkers due to the ability of playing with their thoughts (Isbell & Raines, 2007). In addition, teachers' ideal pupil has to be respectful, calm, and conscientious in his/her works in classroom settings (Westby & Watson, 1995).

To sum up, Starko (2005) separated all above mentioned characteristics and many others into two groups; namely, cognitive and personality characteristics. However, he said that there is no definite distinction between those two characteristics. One of the affective cognitive characteristics most commonly related to creative children is flexibility in thinking and decision making process. Creative children have flexibility in thinking and they are able to look at a situation in a variety of ways or perspectives (Aljughaiman & Reynolds, 2005; Prieto, Parra, Ferrándo, Ferrándiz, Bermejo & Sánchez, 2006). Moreover, their ability to make decision is well-developed. In fact, they are able to choose the best among various options. To demonstrate, a preschool child who has good decision making skills could prefer his/her classmates to choose appropriate material for an activity in classroom. In addition, creative children have independence in their decisions. For instance, they are able to freely evaluate a situation regardless of any help of adults through their own assessment criteria (Starko, 2005).

On the other hand, the personality characteristics of children are open to different and new experiences, extended interests, being tolerant to ambiguity, desire to take risk, originality,

curiosity and loneliness. For example, because of their openness to new experiences, they might frequently encounter things that are interesting or surprising to them and their interest might also be extended through different experiences (Feits, 1998; MacKinnon, 1962; McCrae, 1987). However, according to Sternberg (1988) there is a prerequisite to openness to new experiences; namely, being tolerant of ambiguity. Children who are able to tolerate ambiguity desire to discover or experiment without looking for true or right (Barron & Harrington, 1981; Houtz, Denmark, Rosenfield, & Tetenbaum, 1980). Moreover, these children want to take risks, especially logical risks. For instance, when they contradict their teachers' opinions, they are willing to sell their ideas to their teachers. In addition, creative children's curiosity is very high. In fact, they want to know whatever they wonder about. Particularly, children in young ages ask so many questions to their teachers and they want their questions to be logically responded (Aljughaiman & Reynolds, 2005; Rudowicz & Yue, 2000). Moreover, according to Starko (2005) although most creative children are social, some of them might prefer to be alone to deal with his/her creative experiences. Creative children want to be original in all kinds of their works. Indeed, they always try to find new things to avoid repeating something done previously (Cropley, 1999; Starko, 2005; Taylor, 1988).

As a result, although there are lots of studies in the literature performed by researchers about the characteristics of creative children, there are also many other researches which are conducted with teachers and student teachers about creativity in education.

2.3. Related Studies in the Literature

There are many studies in the literature related to creativity in education. For instance, a study which was carried out by Newton and Newton (2009) indicated that educators should develop more productive thinking as well as creative thinking (e.g. linking creative thinking and critical thinking, especially in science in early childhood education). Moreover, Shohov (2002) conducted a study with elementary school teachers and searched their beliefs about the dimensions of creativity. He found out that a definite curriculum in a school does not support creativity of pupils because of its not being flexible. In fact, creativity could only be manifested by teachers being more flexible as to implementation of the curriculum and capable of breaking certain rules in class atmosphere. On the other hand, while doing this, teachers should be careful regarding children's individual characteristics and they should use very special methods to reveal children's hidden abilities (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001; Diakidoy & Kanari, 1999; Esquivel, 2005).

Cole et al. (1999) conducted a qualitative study which was based on classroom observations and interviews with teachers. The results of their study reflected that teachers might implement some specific assessment techniques and give opportunities to students in order to support children's creativity. Teachers might establish a flexible classroom atmosphere without any hard discipline rules for children to feel relaxed and free to express their feelings, thoughts without any negative interruptions. Hence, teachers might foster children's creativity in this tolerant atmosphere. Furthermore, according to some other researches, teachers might reveal children's creative

potential through the right guidance and good curriculum (Kampylis, Berke, & Saariluoma, 2009; Fleith, 2000).

Although it is well known that teachers have a critical role in the promotion of children's creativity, there is lack of research and literature associated with pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in education (Kowalski, 1997; Nickerson, 1999). The specific studies in the literature conducted with pre-service or in-service teachers' views associated with creativity were summarized as following:

Tan (2007) conducted a research with ninety five pre-service and one hundred and sixteen in-service teachers through using the five-likert scale. The researcher wanted participants to rate the degrees of usefulness of practices to nurture creativity. At the end of the study, she concluded that while most of the in-service teachers and very few of pre-service teachers reported certain activities as useful to promote creativity, the remaining participants reported the same activities as student-centred independent as well as collaborative educational activities.

İşler & Bilgin (2002) carried out a study with pre-service teachers to discover their perceptions towards creativity and the factors that affect creativity. The total number of the participants was one hundred and eighty five teacher candidates. A questionnaire which was developed by the authors to gather the data was used. Results were consistent with similar studies in the literature. In fact, the definition of creativity was focused on mostly differentiation from others. Nevertheless, the product was not considered. Moreover, creativity was mostly perceived through music, art, literature and theatre. The results also showed that although teachers are predisposed to nurture

children's creativity, the curriculum does not affect development of children's creativity. Lastly, more than a half of the participants reported that previous knowledge increases individual's creativity.

Another study which was performed by Tan (1999) aimed to understand pre-service teachers' views on primary and elementary teachers' function regarding how effective teachers are at developing children's creativity in classroom settings. The participants were a hundred and forty teacher candidates. The method of the study was quantitative one including nine likert scales which rated teachers' characteristics in the role of promoting children's creativity. According to the results of the study, participants reported that primary school teachers who are successful to nurture children's creativity are those who have essential educational skills as well as classroom management skills. Moreover, those teachers were creative and interpersonal in their nature. On the other hand, according to teacher candidates, secondary school teachers who were effective at nurturing creativity of children have creative skills in their nature. In addition, participants reported that those kinds of teachers have an ability to advance their thinking skills as well as social and pedagogical skills of themselves.

Chien & Hui (2010) conducted a research with totally eight hundred and seventy seven in-service early childhood teachers from three Chinese communities; namely, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The reason of investigation of this study was to understand preschool educators' conceptions about fostering creativity of preschool children. A questionnaire was used to obtain the data. Their results showed that creative teaching

environment was based on creative learning environment. Moreover, factors which influence creative performance were associated with developments and in early childhood education.

Diakidoy and Kanari (1999) conducted a study with forty nine pre-service preschool teachers. By using quantitative method, they obtained their data via a questionnaire which evaluates teacher candidates' beliefs about creativity in their educational settings. According to the results of their study, teacher candidates give more importance to art activities in their education settings rather than other types of activities to nurture creativity.

The research which is conducted by Bolden, Harries and Newton (2010) in the field of early childhood education established that pre-service early childhood educators are inadequate to nurture creativity in their classroom settings regarding mathematics in early childhood education.

Another important research held by Çetingöz (2002) investigated one hundred and sixteen pre-service preschool teachers' abilities to think creatively. She analyzed the relationships between teachers' candidates' level of creativity, ages, status of early childhood education, and educational levels. She used student introduction form and Torrance's Creative Thinking Test (verbal-A) to obtain the data. The results of her study indicated that there is a decline in the mean averages from flexibility to originality associated with their creativity. However, participants' ages and the status of early childhood education do not have an impact on some levels of creative thinking; namely, fluency and flexibility. The results showed that there is a

difference between participants' educational levels and their levels of fluency, flexibility and originality.

Aljughaiman & Reynolds (2007) also conducted a study with elementary school teachers related to their conceptions of creativeness and creative pupils. In their research, the authors used a quantitative research method, specifically a questionnaire. The results showed that teachers have incorrect conceptions about how creativity could be formed. In addition, the results revealed that there is a conflict between teacher's reports and their practice towards creative children in their classroom settings.

Fleith (2000) conducted a study with thirty one students who are continuing their third and fourth grade and seven teachers. Her aim was to investigate participants' conceptions of creativity regarding how creativity could be nurtured or suppressed in classroom atmosphere. The results of the study represented that both teachers and students supported the idea of nurturing classroom atmosphere which could provided children with opportunities to make decision and to feel confident. Also, it is stressed that if teachers create a relaxing classroom atmosphere in which every member's ideas are welcomed and making mistakes is tolerated, children's creativity could be effectively flourished.

Kampylis et al. (2009), conducted a study with one hundred and thirty two teachers, including seventy in-service teachers and sixty two teacher candidates to get familiarized with teachers' and teacher candidates' general conceptions about creativity, their conceptions' about creativity in primary school framework, and their feelings about the function of well-

equipped teachers to promote creativity. The authors gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from the participants via Teachers' Conceptions of Creativity Questionnaire. According to the results of this study, researchers found that the vast majority of the participants believed in the teachers' crucial role in promoting children's creativity; however, they also believed that they were not well-equipped to deal with creativity in depth in their educational life. Moreover, they also concluded that there is a need for some researches to deeply understand the teachers' perspectives on creativity as well as to understand their needs to help increase creative potential of children.

Aslan & Cansever (2009) also analyzed primary school teachers' perceptions associated with creativity in educational atmosphere. The authors studied seven in-service teachers aiming at investigating their awareness of creativity as well as application of creative practices in their classroom settings. In addition, in this study, researchers used focus group technique which is one of the qualitative research techniques. The result of this study indicated that teachers are aware of the significance of creativity in children's education. In addition, they already try to encourage children's creative endeavors in their classroom atmosphere. However, they also reported that there is some lack of support from parents and school management restricting development of creativity of children.

Fryes & Collings (1991) conducted a study to explore teachers' views associated with creativity, too. The participants were one thousand and twenty eight teachers and education experts. The material of the study was a survey questionnaire on perceptions of creativity including how creativity could be

promoted, and what teachers' and experts' choices of methods of teaching are. Additional data collection method was interviews. In fact, the authors made follow-up interviews with thirty one participants of all participants involved in the study. The results of their study showed that participants associated creativity with novelty and self-expression. Nevertheless, very few participants reported that they could foster those two characteristics in children. Moreover, although most of the participants considered that creativity could be promoted, they did not know how they do this and they did not specify techniques to nurture creativity.

Lee & Seo (2006), on the other hand, explored elementary teachers' understanding of creativity. The number of the participants of their study was forty two. The authors used open-ended questionnaire to gather the data. Three aspects of the participants' answers were analyzed in terms of cognitive, personal, and environmental constituents of creativity. The results showed that two third of the participants were focused either on one or on two components of creativity. In fact, very few of the teachers had a balanced view regarding all three components of creativity.

2.4. Creativity in Preschool Curriculum in Turkey

The last version of early childhood curriculum provided by Turkish Ministry of National Education was updated in 2006. The curriculum emphasizes the significance of creativity as one of the basic principles of early childhood education. It also reflects the key role of the teacher and play as nurturing children's imagination and creativity. In addition, the curriculum mentions about the dynamic interaction of different areas of early childhood education in order to increase children's development

regarding creativity. However, when it is analyzed regarding the items related to goals and objectives for different developmental areas of children, there is no item that directly includes creative message for children or teachers (MONE, 2006).

As a result, although creativity issue is not obviously emphasized in national preschool curriculum in Turkey, it is well established and bountiful guide for early childhood educators with its invaluable information to help teachers considering their children's creativity.

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, creativity was reviewed theoretically. Specifically, the theories such as constructivist theory, social constructivist theory, multiple intelligence theory, etc. all of which emphasize the importance of creativity were analyzed. However, the constructivist theory was determined as the most appropriate theory supporting this research. Explaining the dimensions of creativity; creative product, creative process, creative environment, and creative person were examined in detail. In fact, the meaning of creative product and the harmful effect of focusing on only the product of the children were stated. In comparison to creative product, the creative process was found more crucial. Interpreting the meaning of creative process, many models such as the Wallas's (1926) traditional model, the Torrance's (1969) model of creative process and the Osborn's (1969) creative problem solving method were also reviewed. The crucial role of the environment in terms of cultivating children's creativity was explained regarding the role of teachers, school administrators, and parents. Apart from the effect of the environment on children's creativity, the characteristics of creative individuals were expressed

both in Turkish culture and in some of the foreign cultures. As a result, it was detected that some characteristics of creative individuals differ from culture to culture. Moreover, the literature about the personality and cognitive characteristics of creative children were included. Nevertheless, although some of the teachers, in their reports, are aware of the obvious characteristics of creative people, they do not value those characteristics practically. Most importantly, similar sources related to pre-service and in-service teachers' views regarding creativity in early childhood education were mined. In addition, in the last part of the literature review, the national preschool curriculum was analyzed in terms of creativity.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter represents the overall research design, research questions of the study, description of the participants and the data collection instrument, the information about pilot study, the information about the focus group technique, data collecting procedures, and data analysis procedures.

3.1. Overall Research Design

In this study, the researcher applied qualitative data analysis method to find out pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. Merriam (2007) describes basic or generic qualitative study as one of the ways of qualitative research and as a process by means of which data collector obtains data to explore and understand the process. Furthermore, in this type of analysis, the method is also aimed at identifying perspectives of the people who participated in the research. In the light of this definition, this study was conducted to understand in-depth descriptions of the pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education based on their experiences in both pre-service and in-service context. After data collection procedure was completed, the participants' responds were analyzed and their views were used to define categories. The following figure (Figure 1) summarizes the design of the study.

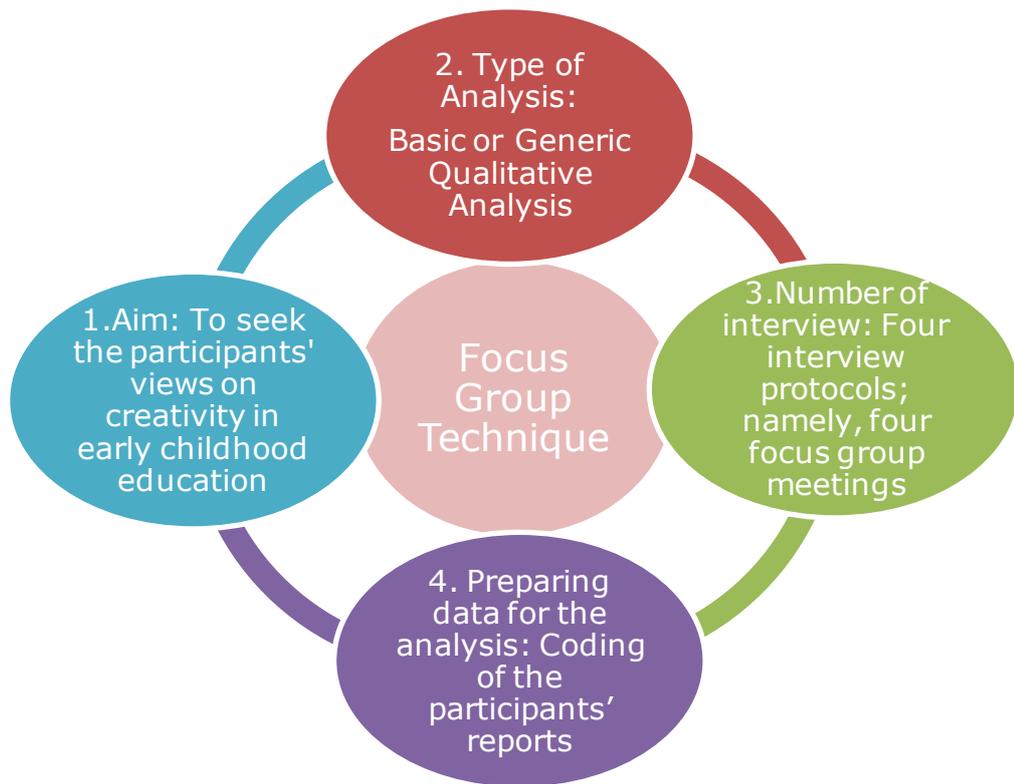


Figure 1. General View of the Design of the Study

(Source: Kamylyis, 2010. p.70)

3.2. Research Questions

In this study, the researcher aimed at understanding pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. The following research questions were used by the researcher to be able to reach this aim:

1. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity?

2. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creative people?

3. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education settings?

4. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on obstacles to creativity in early childhood education?

3.3. The Participants

There were two groups of participants. One of the groups included ten senior pre-service students in the Department of Early Childhood Education at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The other group included eleven participants who were in-service teachers with one year to nine years of working experience as preschool teachers and they graduated from different public universities in Turkey. While selecting the participants, the researcher's goal was to form groups in such a way that their members with similar experiences and educational backgrounds would be able to get together in order to come up with heterogeneous responses reflecting their collective points of view (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001). In addition, the researcher considered the participants' schedules and their availabilities for the meetings while arranging meeting times (Weathington, Cunningham & Pittenger, 2010). Moreover, the researcher noticed that all participants were in similar age and had similar socio economic status.

Table 3.1 The number of the participants in each group

The number of the focus groups	The number of the pre-service teachers	The number of the in-service teachers
First group	5	-
Second group	5	-
Third group	-	5
Fourth group	-	6
Total	10	11

3.4. The Pilot Study of the Questions

The pilot study of this research was conducted with 8 graduate students pursuing their graduate level courses at the same university. While three of the participants did not have any work experiences in preschool settings, the remaining participants (5) had only one year or less experience in the field. The main purpose of the pilot study was to test previously defined focus group questions' clarity (Appendix A). After finishing the pilot study, the researcher did not have to change the content of the questions; however, she rearranged some of them and extended the same questions with some additions to get more detailed information from the participants or to make the questions more clear. Furthermore, the researcher and another expert from the early childhood education field analyzed the pilot data in order to outline themes, sub-themes and initial codes before the data analysis. As a result they decided the same coded line segments and codes; hence there was a full

consensus between the two researchers and the researcher ensured the reliability of the study.

The pilot study offered many advantages to the researcher. For example, the comprehensibility of the interview questions was tested to increase the validity of the instrument. In addition, the researcher had an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the research questions to get necessary responds from the participants in a group atmosphere. The pilot study also helped to make the sequence of the questions follow a logical order. The researcher both improved her skills regarding dealing with a group and tested the duration of focus group protocol for main study.

3.5. Data Collection Instrument

Focus group technique was used to gain detailed information about pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. The original version of the seven interview questions was developed by Aslan and Cansever (2009) to determine the elementary school teachers' awareness of the importance of creativity in education. In this research, however, the participants were early childhood teachers and teacher candidates. Therefore, the researcher had to make some changes regarding the preschool education context. Revisions were reviewed and approved by two experts in the early childhood education field at Middle East Technical University.

As a result, the interview protocol contained seven basic questions (Appendix B). The first research question aimed at finding out the participants' definition of creativity in general. The second research question was related to creative people's

characteristics in general. Then, the next research question was associated with the relationship between creativity and rote learning. While asking this question, the researcher asked the participants to remember their responds to the first question and answer it accordingly since those two questions were related to each other. In the next research question, the participants were asked whether socialization process affects young children's creativity or not. In this question, to get more comprehensive responds, the researcher steered participants in the direction of parents and teachers in order to reveal the participant's views on their role on children's creativity. The next question was more specific to get more information from the participants. In this question, it was asked whether the participants use creative activities in educational settings or not. If yes, they were requested to provide some examples of their creative activities. At the end, the participants were asked about their views on school management systems' role in fostering creativity of children.

Table 3.2 Main themes of pre-services and in-services teachers' responses and the examples of research questions for each theme

Main Themes	Example Research Questions
Teachers' views on creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does creativity mean to you in general?
Teachers' views on creative people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, what are characteristics of creative people?
Teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the similarities and the differences between creativity and rote learning? • As a pre-school teacher, do you implement any activities that require children to be creative in your educational settings? If yes, please give an example illustrating how you implement these activities.
Teachers' views on creativity obstacles in educational settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do school administrators support or hamper use of creative activities in your classroom settings? Please give an example illustrating how the school administrators support or hamper use of creative activities in your classroom settings?

3.6. Focus Group Technique and Data Collection Procedures

3.6.1. Focus Group Technique

In data collection procedure, the focus group technique was used. According to Krueger and Casey (2000), in focus group interviews, the main target of the researcher is to understand the participants' views on a definite topic in a well-organized space where participants feel themselves comfortable. In this technique, all participants in each group were interviewed at the same time. It is suggested to increase the participants' active involvement, duration of focus group interviews should be limited in one and a half hour or two hours (Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996).

In the literature it is stated that focus group technique has many disadvantages. For example, if there is a dominant character among the participants, escalation and showdown could take place or his/her views could have an impact on others. Moreover, in contrast to survey method, this method is based on a small-size sample of population; thus, the outputs of the study would not be representative. Furthermore, both transcribing the data and analyzing the mixed answers and interpretations are reasonably hard and lengthy processes (Burton, 2000). Hence, it is understood that this technique is so sensitive to differences in personality that any of the participants might avoid revealing his/her ideas or experiences if they feel themselves uneasy (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Although focus group technique has some disadvantages, it also has an array of important advantages. Robson (2002) emphasized the advantages of using the focus group technique.

For instance, it saves both money and time. Furthermore, a participant could experience deeper insight by extending other participants' answers and might have many opportunities for additional comments on any answer of the others in this type of environment. Furthermore, if a new idea arises from one participant, the others could make it deeper by extending the view with his/her own interpretations and experiences. In this case, differently from the individual interviews, it could raise even the most elusive issues (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In addition, according to Krueger and Casey (2000), this method creates a brainstorming atmosphere in terms of strong interaction among the participants during the focus group meetings.

3.6.2. Data Collection Procedures

In the beginning of the data collection procedure, the researcher asked the participants to fill out consent forms (Appendix C). Then, the volunteer participants met at an appropriate place and at a suitable time for both the researcher and each participant. The space was arranged taking into consideration appropriate physical conditions, such as sound and lightening. Furthermore, audio recording device was used to record the participants' responses.

The process was realized four times (2 sets of each group). Additionally, each group included not more than 6 participants (pre-service group one: 5, pre-service group two: 5, in-service group one: 5, and in-service group two: 6 participants). This was done based on the suggestions regarding the group size that could be found in the literature. For example, Greenbaum (1998) states that the optimum number of participants was 4 to 6

persons in order to enhance obtaining of in-depth information from the participants. As a result, the researcher interviewed two groups of pre-service teachers and two groups of in-service teachers.

While collecting the data, firstly, brief information about the topic, aim, process and duration of the study was given to some of the participants by the researcher in each focus group interviews. After that, focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher who behaved during the interviews in accordance with her role as a moderator. The researcher asked the interview questions to the participants one by one and, if necessary, she asked additional questions during the progress of an interview based on the revisions that had been done after the pilot study.

3.7. Data Analysis Procedure

In the data analysis procedure, firstly, interview audio-records were transcribed by the author. Then, as suggested by Creswell (2007), data analysis was done by two independent coders; namely, the researcher and a research assistant in the department of early childhood education at the Middle East Technical University. Both coders worked independently to create codes. After this phase was finished by the coders, the codes were compared to increase validity of the findings. The coded line segments and codes of the coders were the same; therefore, there was a full consensus between the two researchers.

During this process, pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' reports were read and the essential issues about teachers' views on creativity that appear in their explanations were summarized. Additionally, the researcher made comparison between pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' reports

and identified some common phrases, words, and sentences. On the other hand, the researcher reviewed related literature considering whether there were similar or different codes or not. She found that there were similar codes which were constituted by Aslan and Cansever (2009). Those codes were the perceptions of teachers about creativity, the characteristics of creative teacher, the importance of creativity in education, and the obstacles to creativity.

At the end of this process, pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' ideas were specified in terms of "teachers' views on creativity", "teachers' views on creative people", "teachers' views on importance of creativity in early childhood education", and "teachers' views on obstacles to creativity in early childhood educational settings".

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of the data analyses that explored pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. To be able to understand the participants' views about creativity, following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity?

2. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creative people?

3. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education?

4. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the creativity obstacles?

In the light of the research questions, pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education were described under four dimensions as "teachers' views on creativity", "teachers' views on creative people", "teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education", and "teachers' views on the creativity obstacles".

4.1. Pre-Service and In-Service Preschool Teachers' Definitions on Creativity

This section describes the views of 10 pre-service early childhood teachers' and 11 in-service early childhood teachers' views regarding the definition of creativity.

Although more than a half of the pre-service early childhood teachers (6 out of 10) defined creativity as discovering of a creative product, 2 out of 6 participants stated that creativity is differentiating or extending something already existing to obtain completely different thing from it. For instance, one of the pre-service teachers addressed that "creativity is not only to explore new things, but also to modify already existing things to create novel products" (Pre-S13).

Six out of 11 pre-service teachers defined creativity as either having different perspective from everyone else or thinking in a different way from others. Some of the definitions of pre-service early childhood teachers were as follows: (i) "thinking out of the box" (Pre-S18), (ii) "looking at the same point together with everyone and perceiving it differently from others" (Pre-S16), and (iii) "producing original ideas for a situation" (Pre-S20).

A small percentage of pre-service teachers (2 out of 10) associated creativity with society. They stated that (i) "creativity is to be a beneficent individual for society" (Pre-S17) and (ii) "creativity is producing something new for society" (Pre-S20).

In addition to pre-service preschool teachers, in-service preschool teachers reported similar definitions about creativity. Almost all of the in-service teachers expressed their common ideas about the definition of creativity. Majority of the in-service teachers (7 out of 11) defined creativity as (i) "being unusual"

(In-S4), (ii) "producing original ideas" (In-S2), and (iii) "having different point of views than other people" (In-S8). Two of the participants' definitions were as follows: (i) "creativity is thought as one of the personality characteristics that makes individuals different from others" (In-S6),

(ii) Creativity means novelty which is different than others. Examples might include different usage of a tool or a word than its original use. For example: using a tureen as a glass to drink water (In-S3).

In addition, more than a half of the in-service preschool teachers (6 out of 11) stated that creativity is to develop a new perspective by adding something to the already existing things, to bring a different dimension to something which has already been initiated, and to express the things noticeable by everyone in a unique and different way. (i) "Paying attention into something seen by everyone in the environment and individuating it" (In-S4), (ii) "creativity means to interpret life or experiences in a completely different manner, to express them in a different way, and to approach them with a different viewpoint" (In-S5).

In summary, approximately, all of the participants seem to focus on originality, difference and innovation of something. However, unlike in-service teachers, pre-service teachers enriched the definitions of creativity. Especially, these participants mentioned the social dimension of creativity. Moreover, pre-service teachers also stressed the relation creativity with the already existing things to express creativity.

4.2. Pre-service and In-service Preschool Teachers' Views on Creative People

More than a half of the pre-service early childhood teachers (6 out of 10) asserted that unlike anyone else, creative individuals give a different meaning to events. Nearly half of the teacher candidates (4 out of 10) came up with a question of who could be called as creative while expressing their thoughts about the features of creative people. Therefore, the topic moved towards assessment of creative ideas. These participants also stressed that creative ideas or products should be individually assessed. For instance:

It is important to know each person's individual characteristics and developmental stages in order to make individual assessment instead of comparing his/her with others if s/he demonstrates a performance which is higher than his/her own developmental level (Pre-S15).

In addition, some of the participants summarized creative people in one or two words. To illustrate, (i) "having the courage to break the rules" (Pre-S15 & Pre-S21), (ii) "being flexible and practical" (Pre-S12 & Pre-S17), (iii) "being a good observer and researcher" (Pre-S14), (iv) "having self-confidence and expressing himself/herself very well" (Pre-S21), and (v) "being repartee and having problem solving ability" (Pre-S18 & Pre-S19).

In-service early childhood teachers, on the other hand, concentrated on the individual characteristics of creative people when expressing their ideas about creative individuals. Almost half of the in-service teachers (5 out of 11) stated that quick and sophisticated thinking as well as the ability of rapid decision making are the most distinctive personality characteristics of creative people.

Some of the participants, on the other hand, (4 out of 11 in-service teachers) associated creativity with the capability of solving problems. These participants claimed that creativity might be stimulated by a problem and that creativity appears during the process of problem solving. Besides, 3 out of 4 of these in-service teachers emphasized that people who are able to solve problems in a creative manner might have a high self-confidence. Two of the participants' explanations were as follows: (i) "A creative person is a person who could easily cope with the challenges" (In-S8),

(ii)...for example, you are going to drink wine with your sweetheart in the middle of the night and you have just realized that you do not have a corkscrew in your house. In such a situation, removing the screws from the back side of the cassette player and using it to uncork the bottle means being creative. However, people who do not have a self-confidence would say that they would not be able to drink wine because of the lack of corkscrew. In this case, creativity would be destroyed and it could not be mentioned. Creative individuals are able to deal with the problems they encounter and to guess the way to overcome the difficulties (In-S3).

On the other hand, specifically, 1 out of 4 teachers stressed that self-confidence should be supported by parents and teachers as well as environment:

Of course, creative individual is an individual with high self-confidence. However, an individual's self-confidence should not be impeded in early ages. It should not be said to a child that s/he could not achieve something. Especially, in early childhood period, children are so creative that they could experience different kinds of things. If adults repress children's creativity by achieving their children's work themselves instead of giving an opportunity to the children to be creative, their children will always need adults to complete their work in their future life. In conclusion, parents, teachers, and environment are effective in

increasing children's self-confidence which is one of the vital things for children's creativity (In-S4).

In addition, another group of in-service teachers (4 out of 11) pointed out that individuals should have different viewpoints belonging solely to themselves or should produce original ideas or products to be called creative. Participants' responses reflecting their views about creative people are presented below through the examples from their reports:

(i) I obviously think that an individual who imitates others' work or accept everything without questioning could not be called as a creative person. However, an individual who produces new, novel, and specific ideas and who could oppose some ideas s/he does not accept could be labeled as a creative individual (In-S6).

(ii) A creative individual is an individual who thinks in a different way from others and generates original ideas. For instance, using a car wheel as a flowerpot or as a swing might be considered as the indicators of creativity (In-S11).

In brief, based on pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views about creative people, most of them emphasized some essential characteristics of creative individuals such as high self-confidence, advanced thinking, problem solving skills, and being able to produce original ideas based on different viewpoints.

4.3. Pre-service and In-service Preschool Teachers' Views on the Importance of Creativity in Early Childhood

Pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the importance of creativity are explored based on their reports related to the relationship between creativity and rote learning. Half of the pre-service teachers (5 out of 10) who believe in the

importance of creativity mentioned that there is no relationship between creativity and rote learning. These participants claimed that rote learning requires direct intake of knowledge, being passive during the learning process, and too much repetition while creativity demands an innovation or dissimilarity. To demonstrate: (i) "Memorization means to accept the existing things, creativity, on the other hand, to be original or innovative. Therefore, there is no similarity between them" (Pre-S14),

(ii) Memorization requires too much repetition, exact understanding, and thinking; however, creativity requires creating new and novel things. In memorization, because there is no query, everything is accepted by individuals exactly as it is. Moreover, nothing could be internalized during memorization process (Pre-S20).

Half of the pre-service teachers (5 out of 10) who firstly reported the idea that there is no similarity between creativity and rote learning changed their ideas as a result of this focus group discussion since all of the participants in each focus group settings hear all the responses of each other and their ideas might be affected from these kind of atmosphere. They began to claim that creativity and rote learning might support each other. In addition, they indicated that creativity requires some prior knowledge and one of the ways of acquiring knowledge is memorization. In fact, they accepted rote learning as a first step for creativity: (i) "So long as an individual could establish a connection among the things s/he memorizes, this connection could be a tiny stone of the basis of creativity" (Pre-S21),

(ii)...in conclusion, nobody could be creative without using his/her prior knowledge. Memorization of the information is

certainly one of the preconditions for creativity. After memorization, people think and try to find creative things as well as have a tendency to solve problems (Pre-S13).

(iii) Rote learning is used in old educational methods and, as far as I am concerned, this method is necessary for creativity in some circumstances. Especially, rote learning is needed to gain rudiments. Creativity, too, might be a thing that is fed by related rudiments. To put it in another way, creativity and rote learning are not opposite things; conversely, they might complete each other (Pre-S14).

A few of the participants (3 out of 10) expressed their thoughts about the relationship between creativity and rote learning by considering the effects of age factor. Indeed, 1 of these participants (1 out of 3) stated that individuals' creativity in young ages is different from their creativity in the older ages. Moreover, this participant pointed out that while creativity and memorization sometimes support each other, one of them sometimes might be dominant with the continuing age. Another participant who believes in the effect of age factor in one's creativity emphasized that creativity develops with continuing ages based on individuals' life experiences and prior knowledge. The last participant of this group reported that although individuals have lack of knowledge and life experiences in young ages, they could still produce very creative products.

Some of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S17, Pre-S18, and Pre-S19), on the contrary, asserted that a person does not need to memorize knowledge to be creative. Moreover, very few of the participants (2 out of 10) believed that creativity is subjective rather than objective. Additionally, very small number of teacher

candidates (2 out of 10) mentioned that creativity could be learned.

If creativity is taught to a child, s/he could feel a tendency to produce something compulsorily. Moreover, s/he might have a tendency to memorize knowledge because of the obligation to solve problems differently (Pre-S16).

In addition, while expressing whether they use creative activities in their classroom settings or not, all the pre-service teachers stated that they always prepare creative activities during their practicum for young children. Only one participant (Pre-S16) specifically said that she gained necessary skills and knowledge to prepare creative activities for children during her undergraduate years.

Four out of 10 pre-service teachers emphasized that children's active participation in the activities could be easily enhanced during creative open-ended activities. They also indicated that they try to make children active during the activities in classroom settings.

Two out of 10 participants also indicated that creative activities could make young children happy. Hence, they also stated that they try to prepare creative activities for children in their practicum classrooms.

In the case of importance of creativity, half of the pre-service teachers (5 out of 10) stressed that activities which nurture children's creativity should necessarily be prepared considering how to develop more than one area of children's development. At this point, some of the explanations of pre-service teachers are as follows: (i) "I always try to integrate all areas and create a different thing at the end" (Pre-S17), (ii) "I

always try to use creative activities without fixing them in a certain area and making any discrimination among them" (Pre-S20).

However, 2 out of 5 pre-service teachers also stressed that creativity could be fostered particularly in art activities. The explanations of these participants were as follows:

(i) We learned that creativity could be fostered in different areas; for instance, during science and mathematics activities, but when creativity is mentioned, the art activities directly come to my mind. I mean, creativity is most intense in art (Pre-S12),

(ii) Although the most intense area that we could use creativity is art, we could also use creative activities in literature activities. To illustrate, we might want children to complete the story which is cut in its half (Pre-S14).

On the other hand, more than a half of the in-service early childhood teachers (6 out of 11) pointed out that there is no relationship between creativity and rote learning. Some of them (4 out of 6) explained this point by claiming that while there is an acceptance of everything without probing or adding something to already existing things in the memorization, creativity requires to be different and to be able to produce something new. Also, majority of them (7 out of 11) associated creativity with rote learning positively or negatively. In essence, in-service teachers who try to establish a connection between creativity and memorization underlined that creativity is based on learning. However, their thoughts differentiated at this point in terms of whether rote learning is a way of learning or not. Less than a half of the participants (4 out of 11) see rote learning as a prerequisite for creativity. In other words, they

believed that memorization is necessary for learning something:

- (i) Memorization is the most essential part of learning (In-S5),
- (ii) If we say that creativity means alteration of already existing things to produce different viewpoint, we should have some knowledge about these already existing things which are obtained through rote learning (In-S2).

In contrast, 3 out of 11 participants emphasized that there is no place for memorization in creativity. One of the participants said that: "Learning should be achieved in a creative way without memorization" (In-S10).

In addition, when they were asked if they use creative activities in their classroom, all of the in-service teachers reported that they use these types of activities in their classroom settings.

Three out of 11 in-service teachers mentioned their creative activities by stating that those creative activities should be prepared to support not merely one particular developmental area of children, but all developmental areas of them. Only 1 out of 10 in-service teachers (In-S1) emphasized the importance of art activities in fostering creativity in early childhood education. Moreover, In-S1, In-S2, and In-S6 asserted that children enjoy creative activities therefore; they endeavor to prepare creative activities to make children happy.

More than a half of the in-service teachers (6 out of 11) who creativity seem to implement open-ended activities instead of bordered activities to stimulate children's creativity as well as to provide opportunities to children to demonstrate their creative potentials. There are some quotations exemplifying this viewpoint:

(i) I told children about discovery of tea bags as a museum activity. In fact, I emphasized that a discovery occurs by chance... After that, as a follow-up activity, I wanted children to select any object in the museum, and then guess how this object could be created to share their opinions with their friends. At the end of the activity, most of the children told us interesting stories (In-S2),

(ii) I told children a story that I created with using power point presentation. After the presentation that took nearly 6-7 minutes, we planned to make an activity with children and we decided to create a play in the form of drama. Although I didn't orient them, children began to play the roles of the characters that I mentioned in the story. They added some different things to the story during the dramatization process (In-S6).

Very few of the in-service teachers (2 out of 11) said that although the opportunities of schools are very important to nurture children's creativity, in fact teachers are the key individuals to flourish children's creativity. If they want to support children's creativity through the creative activities in the classroom, they are able to achieve this even with limited opportunities.

To sum up, the answers of pre-service and in-service preschool teachers indicated that all participants believe in the importance of creativity and try to foster it. While some of the pre-service and in-service teachers focused on the importance of prior knowledge which might be gained through memorization and/or rote learning, some of them said that there is no need to memorize to be creative for some individuals. Moreover, although in-service teachers ignore the effects of age on children's creativity, pre-service teachers made connection between age and creativity. In addition, all participants reported that they try to implement creative activities in their classroom

settings. Some of them indicated that creativity should be nurtured during all types of activities in all areas of early childhood education. Specifically, some of the participants paid attention to the importance of art activities to support children's creativity. Some of the participants, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of open-ended activities that enhance children's active participation as well as enjoyable activities that make children more involved and happy during the activities.

4.4. Pre-service and In-service Preschool Teachers' Views on the Obstacles to Creativity in Early Childhood Education

The pre-service and in-service teachers' views vary related to obstacles to creativity in early childhood education. The reports of the participants about the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education could be grouped under two basic subtitles:

1. The obstacles related to school administrators, teachers and parents
2. The obstacles related to other factors

For the first subtitle, while participants explained obstacles to creativity in early childhood education, they mostly stressed negative effects of the school administrators as well as negative effects of parents and teachers on children's creativity. For the second subtitle, participants reported the negative effects of the educational system, heredity and technology on children's creativity.

4.4.1. Creativity Obstacles Related to the School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents

Obstacles to creativity in early childhood education were mostly related to the school administrators according to the findings of the current study. The effects of teachers and parents are also emphasized in this part of the findings.

While more than a half of the pre-service teachers (6 out of 10) purely stated that children's creativity is not supported by school administrators, 2 out of 10 indicated that their supports are mostly affected by their schools' conditions. Specifically, these participants emphasized that if the preschool's economical sources are sufficient, they could easily support teachers' creative endeavors related to children's creativity.

Six out of ten pre-service teachers also claimed that when a school administrator does not support creative activities, teachers might do whatever they want to foster children's creativity in their classrooms by using their own creativity.

(i) When teachers are confronted with the strict and stereotyped school management system, they might use their creativity to manipulate administrators' demands regarding children's creativity (Pre-S13),

(ii) Everything depends on teachers. Even if the school administrators try to prevent them from supporting creativity in children, teachers might use their own creativity in their creative class activities (Pre-S17).

Two out of these 6 pre-service teachers who are aware of the importance of creativity reported that teachers might encounter some problems arising from their contrasting ideas with school administrators. The comments of them were as follows:

(i) The teacher might prepare and implement creative activities for his/her children. Then, children share their experiences with their parents. After that, if parents think that the particular activity or experience is not creative, they might come to school to hold responsible to school administrators from that situation (Pre-S16).

(ii) While teachers try to fulfill the requirements of the school administrators and implement their creative activities in classroom at the same time, they might encounter some time scheduling problems (Pre-S20).

In addition, nearly half of the pre-service teachers (4 out of 10) having similar thoughts with in-service teachers. They mentioned that the purpose of school administrators is not to support children's creativity; in fact, their essential target is to display children's products which are obtained at the end of the activities to parents.

The thing that should be exhibited is the creative products of children. However, the school administrators demands teachers to make creative products themselves instead of children in order to demonstrate pleasant products (Pre-S14).

In addition, half of the prospective teachers (Pre-S12, Pre-S14, Pre-S16, Pre-S17 and Pre-S20) provided examples related to their ideas about restriction of individuals' creativity. They also associated the reasons of this situation with the factors related to the lack of communication and inconsistency between parents' and teachers' ideas. Some of the excerpts of teacher candidates were as follows:

(i) Families' role in development of their children's creativity is very important from the beginning of the early years. For example, my nephew painted the sun in black while drawing a picture. Then, his father asked him what he had drawn in his paper. He told about his drawing and said that he had drawn the sun and a house. His father said that he could not

paint the sun black as it is always yellow. Then, his son explained that he had painted the sun black because it was night then. I think the creativity of my nephew is positively developed (Pre-S12),

(ii) Some pictures were given to children in order to color them. Then, teacher explained to children that they should use yellow to paint bananas, green or purple to paint grapes and yellow or green to paint pears. During the process, some of the children wanted his/her teacher to remind them the color of the fruit that s/he was coloring. Because of my being a student teacher, I could not make any comment about the teacher's approach (Pre-S17).

A half of the pre-service teachers (5 out of 10) also claimed that a possible reason of this situation could be associated with the inconsistent behaviors of both parents and the school administrators.

A teacher might not limit children regarding the use of colors during the painting activities. Hence, a child might use white color in Santa Claus's beard. Then, parents might see that particular work and might not consider the role of this work on children's creativity. Therefore, the parents might come to school to report this situation to the school administrators. As a result, this situation might be an example of the contradiction between teachers and parents' awareness regarding the development of children's creativity (Pre-S14).

In addition, one of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S16) stated that children enjoy actively participating to the activities. However, 4 out of 10 pre-service teachers explained that the active participation of children to the activities could not be achieved. In essence, they said that children are very passive during the activity process since teachers make everything instead of them. These same four teacher candidates explained the possible reasons of that particular situation. They said that teachers' behaviors might be associated with the expectations of

the school administrators. They said that the school administrators demand them to display beautiful products in the school board. One of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S15) indicated that this situation leads to the competitive environment among teachers.

One of these 4 teachers made a connection between limited creative activities in classroom settings and administrators' economical concerns. She explained her reasoning in the following excerpt:

Due to the economical reasons, school administrators want teacher to exhibit pleasing and really beautiful products. Because if the products are admired by parents, parents will enroll their children into the same school in the following years (Pre-S13).

Similar to in-service teachers, almost half of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S17, Pre-S18, Pre-S19 and Pre-S20) stated that they are frequently faced with some limitations related to creativity. The same participants also said that there is a stereotyped human figure in society; therefore, if anyone behaves against this human figure, s/he will be rejected by the society. In addition, these teachers claimed that even if the people who are out of this human figure want to make something beneficial for society by using their creative or extraordinary individual characteristics, they will not be accepted by the society.

In addition, very few of the student teachers (Pre-S13 & Pre-S16) said that if a society respects innovations, or differences of the individuals, and supports creativity of children, the level of readiness of the society will increase.

Some other prospective teachers (Pre-S12, Pre-S15 & Pre-S16) stated their views differently and said that creativity has been developed in a positive way over time.

In addition, very few of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S17 & Pre-S20) reported that when creative individuals are excluded from the society, they begin to keep themselves away from other people. Furthermore, these teachers said that those kinds of people maintain their creativity by holding themselves aloof from the society. As a result, these teachers claimed that negative attitudes of society to extraordinary people might positively affect their creativity.

Some of the pre-service teachers (Pre-S17, Pre-S18 and Pre-S20) on the other hand, explained that even if creative individuals are not accepted by the society, of course, they know the way to get them accepted by the society. To illustrate:

Extraordinary individuals marginalized by the society might do something hidden from society. The negative effects of society on creativity could only be eliminated in this way (Pre-S20).

After explaining the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education, pre-service participants gave some recommendations to lessen these obstacles.

More than a half of the pre-service teachers (6 out of 10) specified that there are lots of things that parents, school administrators, teachers and even media could do to encourage children to be more creative. Moreover, they proposed various recommendations about this issue: (i) School administrators should be open to new ideas or innovations to foster creativity of children (Pre-S12),

(ii) Creativity could not be supported only by teachers' creative activities in the classroom atmosphere. Workshops should be provided for parents to help them to learn how to nurture their kids' creativity (Pre-S14),

(iii) To illustrate, a project might be launched such as "7 Çok Geç Projesi" ("7 Is Too Late" project) with the support of ministers, ministry of public education, and media in order to flourish children's creativity. Moreover, parents should be educated about creativity to foster their children's creativity since most of them are not aware of the importance of creativity in young children's development (Pre-S16),

(iv) If the parents who have knowledge about the importance of supporting children's creativity share their knowledge with other parents who are not aware of this issue, all of them could benefit from this situation because they could get together and remind and/or ask to school administrators to support creative activities. Then, they might inform teachers about this issue and direct them to give more emphasis on creative activities (Pre-S17),

(v) A teacher could eloquently transfer his/her knowledge about the importance of creativity in children's education to school administrators, then the school administrators could also transfer their knowledge about that particular issue to parents (Pre-S20),

(vi) If the teachers who believe in the importance of creativity share their knowledge with the parents, parents might inform the school administrators about this issue. The school administrators who are affected by parents' reports begin to support creativity of children (Pre-S20).

In-service teachers' views about school administrators, on the other hand, were different from each other. While nearly all of the in-service teachers (9 out of 11) reported that school administrators do not support their creative acts, only 2 of teachers (2 out of 11) said that school administrators support their creative acts for nurturing children's creativity.

Furthermore, 2 out of 11 in-service teachers also said that school administrators sometimes might have a neutral effect on teachers' creative acts. In fact, it neither cultivates nor destroys creative activities of teachers to foster children's creativity.

The participants who believed that there is not enough support from school administrators to enhance children's creativity (9 out of 11) also provided some possible reasons for this situation. Three out of 9 in-service teachers emphasized the effects of administrators' educational backgrounds. In essence, these teachers asserted that if the administrators earn degrees from departments of early childhood education, they support teachers' creative endeavors. Quotation of an in-service teacher's views regarding the effects of the quality of the school administrators is exemplified below:

I was working in a preschool of which administrator graduated from the department of early childhood education. I could do any kinds of activities including science. During one of the science activities, I needed some toys which could bubble when you blow and the school administrator provided to me required materials for all children. This behavior of the administrator not only supported me morally, but also raised my motivation. Therefore, it is beneficial to work with school administrators with early childhood education degree (In-S6).

In addition, a few of the in-service teachers (3 out of 11) reported another reason of obstacles to creative activities in classrooms related to the school administrators. These teachers said that very huge number of children in their classroom which had been enrolled by the school administrators naturally restricts their creative activities in classroom settings.

In addition, most of the in-service participant teachers (9 out of 11) stressed that the school administrators give

importance to products created at the end of the activities in their classroom settings. Then, 2 out of 9 in-service teachers admitted that they complete activities instead of letting children to do to please school administrators by their products.

When I was working for a school, we did a garment painting activity with children. Children told me what they want to paint and I drew designs for them. At the end, children painted my drawings. After a period of time, children slept and administrator wanted me to paint each child's t-shirt. He explained the reason of his request by saying that children do not have ability to paint well and they could not create beautiful products (In-S5).

Six out of 9 of these teachers agreed with one of the reasons of the school administrators' product-oriented approach. They explained this situation by saying that administrators give importance to products since they are absolutely concerned with parents' appreciation of the products during the exhibition at the end of the semester. One of the expressions of the participant was as follows:

If an activity is interesting and results in a product, school administrators would like it since creativity is not a criterion for them. They only focus on the product. The exhibition at the end of the semester is very important for them. Enhancing young children's development is not as valuable as the products for school administrators (In-S2).

Most of the in-service teachers (8 out of 11) also mentioned possible effects of teachers and parents on children's creativity. These participants firstly emphasized negative effects of the rules set by these adults for children to follow.

(i) Rules set by adults, whether formed in the interior dynamics of the parents or set by the teacher, are something that comes first to my mind when I think of creativity in the social dimension. ...Setting rules, even in

the simplest way, for children from a young age adversely affects their creativity" (In-S6).

(ii) In class, if a teacher prepares corners of different interest areas and does not allow children to use the materials freely and also does not let them mix all those materials based on their wishes with solid rules, s/he will handicap young children's creativity (In-S4).

Then, a few of the in-service teachers claimed that teachers' attitudes towards children regarding creativity might have negative effects on their creativity. Two examples of the participants are given below:

(i) I had a chance to follow a project belonging to primary school children. The subject of the project was the most important discovery in recent years. The teacher wanted children to make a search about this issue. Normally, children wanted to make a search about whatever they found important. For example, a child thought of researching artificial waterfalls in the city that s/he lives. In fact, the most important discovery around him/her was artificial waterfalls. However, the teacher had a rule as following: "There are lots of discoveries and you could not make a proper selection among them. Hence, I want you to make a search regarding mobile phones". While saying that rule, the teacher directly limited or killed the child's creativity (In-S5),

(ii) One of my professors at university wanted us to create an original toy. I had been thinking for days, even months how to create this kind of toy. At the end, I created very different toy which wouldn't be found in any toy shop. Then, it was the day that we presented our creative toys. When I observed the toys made by my classmates, I was surprised since some of them had made baby dolls; some of them had made teddy bears of plush. Then, I was angry with myself since my professor only focused on our products rather than novelty of our ideas while grading them. In summary, my creativity was negatively affected by this experience (In-S7).

When reporting their ideas about the possible effects of parents on children's creativity, very few of the in-service teachers (2 out of 11) said that parents always compare products created by their children with other children's products. These participants also expressed that parents only appreciate beautiful products without paying attention whether they support their children's creativity or not. It is exemplified in the following excerpt:

(i) When I graduated from the university, I was very excited to organize creative activities for children. After a period, I began to be called "a clumsy teacher". The products which were created by my students and exhibited at the end of the activities were not appreciated by parents. However, only the products which were mostly created by teachers were favored by them (In-S1),

(ii) Children's extraordinary or creative behaviors could be reinforced or restricted during their all kinds of communications with adults in any activity. To illustrate, while a child is drinking water with a cup, instead of a water glass, his/her mother might get angry with this behavior. As a result, because she ignored that her child met his/her need in an unusual way, she destroys her child's creativity (In-S3).

A few of the in-service teachers (In-S4, In-S9, & In-S10) expressed that one of the factors negatively affecting children's creativity is the relationship between parents and teachers. One of these teachers expressed her opinion with the following statement:

A teacher might direct children to flexible thinking which is one of the requirements of creativity; however, when a child goes home after school, parents might not support their child's flexible thinking. Therefore, this child's creativity could not be supported well (In-S9).

Despite the negative views above, some of the in-service teachers (In-S2, In-S3, and In-S4) seem to believe that if a teacher is aware of the importance of creativity, s/he could endeavor in various ways to flourish creativity. (i) "Due to the fact that administrators do not frequently observe the classrooms in the school; a teacher could make children do all kinds of creative activities (In-S2),

(ii) If a teacher understand significant role of creativity in children' development, s/he could try to nurture it. When I was working for a school, parents who came to school to pick up their children saw the products that I exhibited on school board. They did not like the products of my children; however, they admired the products that the other classroom's children created. After a time, I invited parents to school and planned to do an activity with their children. I wanted them to draw a picture and then I exhibited each of them. At the end of this process, the activities done by children were appreciated higher and later more emphasis was given to those activities (In-S3).

In addition, there were some positive claims stated by in-service teachers (Pre-S13 & Pre-S16). These teachers expressed that societal needs are effective to reveal one's creativity.

(i) For example, think about a village and people who have to live transportation problems in this settlement. These people need suspension bridge. Then, they built this kind of bridge to meet their transportation needs (In-S8),

(ii) When the influenza epidemic appears in the society, people living in this society demand disinfecting products. Hence, companies produce these kinds of products by using their creativity to meet the needs of society (In-S11).

In conclusion, most of the participants agreed that school administrators mostly have negative effects on children's creativity. They expressed the reason of this by saying that school administrators' essential target is to see well-made or

perfect products made by children to gain parents' appreciation. However, some participants claimed that although the negative effects of school administrators on children's creativity are clear, teachers could still implement creative activities in their own classrooms without interference from the school administrators. Moreover, a few of the participants thought that there were some factors that positively affect children's creativity of children. Pre-service and in-service teachers both tried to express possible reasons of negative factors that might affect children's creativity. However, unlike in-service teachers, pre-service teachers provided some recommendations to deal with the obstacles to children's creativity.

4.4.2. Creativity Obstacles related to Other Factors

Pre-service and in-service teachers mentioned some other factors that might affect children's creativity. While some of the in-service teachers associated the source of obstacles to creativity with the educational system and heredity, some of pre-service teachers, on the other hand, linked it to technological reasons.

Very few of the in-service teachers (2 out of 11) claimed that general educational system has an impact on people who live in society. They said that the Turkish educational system is insufficient to nurture children's creativity. An example of such an opinion is as follows:

I believe that children could learn anything just by playing. This is also true until third grade. Therefore, early childhood classroom atmospheres should also be used in primary school classrooms as well. However, our educational system, in primary grades, wants children to sit on a chair

and listen what teacher says for 40 minutes. Therefore, our educational system does not work (In-S7).

In addition, some of the in-service teachers (In-S7, In-S8, & In-S10) mentioned that heredity might be another reason effecting children's creativity. In essence, these participants reported that some genetic traits coming from parents might negatively or positively affect children's creativity with the effects of environment.

Alternatively, 2 out of 10 pre-service teachers associated creativity with the technology either in a negative or in a positive way. While 1 of these 2 participants claimed that technology helps to support individuals' creativity, the other participant opposed this idea.

4.5. Summary

Overall, this part summarized the results of the study regarding four research questions about creativity in early childhood education. Specifically, teachers' views about the definition of creativity, on creative people, on the importance of creativity in early childhood and on the obstacles to creativity in early childhood were examined. The results showed that all participants had their own creativity definitions and they mostly had some common ideas while defining creativity. In addition, the participants emphasized the personal characteristics of creative people. All of the participants indicated that they are aware of the crucial role of creativity in young children's development. Therefore, they try to prepare creative activities for young children in their school settings. The participants also mentioned obstacles to creativity in early childhood education.

They mostly indicated that teachers, school administrators and parents lead to the obstacles to creativity for young children by providing specific examples. Additionally, some of the participants provided some recommendations related to the issue.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the current study including, the rationale for the study, the research method that was employed and the research questions are summarized. Then, the major findings are discussed. Based on the findings practical implications and recommendations for future research are presented.

The current study was designed to understand pre-service and in-service preschool teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. Basic qualitative research method was employed in this study and the focus group meeting discussions were used to collect the data. The following research questions were used to gather in-depth information on the participants' views:

1. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity?
2. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creative people?
3. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education settings?
4. What are the pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on obstacles to creativity in early childhood education?

5.1. Discussion

This research was conducted to find out pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education. In general, the findings of the current study are analyzed with regard to "teachers' views on creativity", "teachers' views on creative people", "teachers' views on the importance of creativity in early childhood education", and "teachers' views on the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education".

5.1.1. Teachers' Views on Creativity

According to the findings, both pre-service and in-service teachers who participated in the study had similar ideas about what creativity is. In reality, they mostly focused on originality of something while defining creativity. These findings were parallel to other researchers' findings (Cropley, 1999; Feits, 1998; Fryes & Collings, 1991; Mackinnon, 1962; McCrae, 1987; Rothenberg, 1990). For example, Cropley (1999) associated creativity with originality of all kinds of works. In addition, according to the results of Rothenberg's (1990) study, new and valuable products are surely mentioned as creative. Moreover, unlike in-service preschool teachers, pre-service teachers expressed their ideas related to social dimension of creativity. This group of participants also emphasized the importance of first-hand experiences in enhancing young children's creativity. Differences between the ideas of pre-service and in-service teachers might be based on certain reasons. For example, all of the pre-service teachers had already generated some ideas about the meaning of creativity, the importance of experiences regarding creativity and the required criteria for a product to be considered as

creative before participating to the study. In fact, all of the pre-service teachers were still pursuing their education as seniors and they had already taken “creativity” and “visual arts and material development” courses as part of their compulsory courses in their undergraduate period. During the creativity course, they have trained to gain some information on details of both individual and social creativity. Besides, the visual arts and material development course might have helped to increase their level of imagination since pre-service teachers are required to create original 3-d products during these courses.

5.1.2. Teachers' Views on Creative People

Another finding of the study was that most of the pre-service and in-service teachers mentioned importance of individual characteristics of people while expressing their ideas about creative people. They mostly focused on high self-confidence, advance thinking and problem solving skills, generating original ideas, and being able to look at a situation from different perspectives as some essential characteristics of creative people. This seems to be supported by many authors (Harrington, 1981; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2006; Ohuche, 1986; Rudowicz, 2003; Sungur, 1999) who indicated that self-confidence is one of the prior desirable characteristics of creative individuals. Similar ideas of the participants might be explained by participants' educational backgrounds. In fact, although the in-service teachers had more chance to observe/know characteristics of creative children in their classroom settings than pre-service teachers, there was no sharp difference between the pre-service and in-service teachers' views about the creativity issue. This might be related with all pre-service

teachers were from Middle East Technical University which is one of the best universities through its educational programs/opportunities in Turkey. In fact, all pre-service teachers are tried to gain all necessary skills to be a sufficient professional in their field. In addition, all academic sources are provided to the students through the enormous library as well as a variety of social activities.

5.1.3. Teachers' Views on the Importance of Creativity in Early Childhood Education

While explaining their thoughts about importance of creativity, all of the participants said that they valued creativity and they were aware of importance of nurturing children's creativity. Expressing their thoughts about the relationship between rote learning and creativity, half of the participants indicated that there could not be a connection between rote learning/memorization and creativity. This result is consistent with the results of Dündar's (2003) study. According to the results of his study, rote learning restricts children's creativity. Similarly, Beetlestone (1998) explained rote learning as an inefficient and senseless method while educating children. Educational backgrounds or experiences of the participants might have directly affected participants' responds about this issue since our educational system restricts children's creativity by forcing them to undertake a lot of responsibilities from the beginning of early age. According to Dündar's (2003) research considering educational materials that teachers use and the way of teaching children, the Turkish educational system hampers children's creativity. Moreover, the participants' own teachers throughout their educational life might also have affected their

thoughts regarding creativity. Many available studies confirm the fact that educators' influences play an important role in forming views on creativity. For instance, according to the Chambers's (1973) study, educators who provide friendly atmosphere for children, welcome their ideas, reward children's novelty or creativity, and make children active during lessons contribute to their students' creativity. In addition, Renzulli (1992) developed a model which stresses the key role of the teachers as a good model or a guide for children in terms of development of their creativity.

On the other hand, almost half of the participants indicated that they believed in a possible connection between already existing knowledge and creativity. This result was consistent with Cropley's (1999) study. He explained this response by associating it with Piaget's theory of cognitive development. In essence, he pointed out that background information or previous experiences help young children to comprehend new concepts in new environments. Of course, children are the first to come to mind when one thinks of curious explorers of the environment. All in all, creative results occur through the interaction between the processes of assimilation and accommodation.

In addition, unlike in-service preschool teachers, pre-service preschool teachers said that age is one of the important factors which could influence children's creativity directly. Specifically, they indicated that children become more creative in older age than in younger years. This way of thinking might be declared by the participants because of the school practice course that they participated during their undergraduate years. In fact, pre-service early childhood teachers might have a chance to observe

children from different age groups. A similar result was obtained by Starko (2005) and related to the relationship between children's age and their creativity. According to the findings of the research, a child's creative thinking skills increase as long as they become older. In addition, Wu, Cheng, Ip, & McBride-Chang (2005) stated that students in older ages are more creative since they have more experiences, advance thinking skills as well as higher motivation and language abilities. In contrast, while Lubart and Sternberg (1995) stated that individuals could be creative at any age, Torrance (1964) indicated that children's creative potential reach its peak at the age of four. Here, however, it is important to establish how we define creativity. In fact, it depends on the raters' own evaluation criteria (Simonton, 1994).

According to the results, most of the participants also mentioned the necessity of open-ended activities to support creativity. This appears to be consistent with findings of other studies which indicated that open-ended activities for young children enhance their creative thinking skills as well as problem solving skills (Church, 1993; Mayesky, 2009). In addition, both pre-service and in-service teachers emphasized that children's creativity could be supported in all areas of early childhood education. However, some of them thought that the best field to support creativity is art. In connection to this, İşler and Bilgin (2002) reported that one of the most highlighted areas compared to others in early childhood education is art. Similarly, the results of the study which was carried out by Diakidoy and Kanari (1999) indicated that, according to the pre-service

teachers, art activities are more valued than the other activities with regard to nourishing creativity.

In addition, results showed that at the beginning of the focus group meeting discussion, those participants who did not think of the positive relationship between creativity and rote learning altered their ideas as a result of the effect of other group member's thoughts articulated during the discussion. Eventually, all participants reached a common point. This change in views might be attributed to the focus group discussion's atmosphere. During the meeting, the group members mostly embraced their ideas as a result of the group discussion (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007).

The results of the study also indicated that, if teachers believe in importance of creativity for young children, they might dedicate all their efforts to fostering children's creativity by staying away from the pressure of the school administrators and parents in their own classrooms. This might be related to teacher's consciousness about the importance of creativity. In our country, most of teachers are required to know and follow guidelines of Turkish early childhood curriculum provided by Turkish Ministry of National Education (2006). In accordance with this document, children should be educated to be sensitive, responsible, constructive and creative for well-being of society. Teachers' role in this process is to help young children to develop their imagination, creative thinking ability, communication skills, and ability to express their emotions freely. Therefore, encouraged by careful analysis of the Turkish curriculum, a teacher might successfully determine his/her daily or annual

plans including creative activities in accordance with the primary aim of Turkish educational system.

5.1.4. Teachers' Views on the Obstacles to Creativity in Early Childhood Education

With regard to the obstacles to creativity of children, most of the teachers participating in the study emphasized the view that school administrators do not support their endeavors to nurture children's creativity. Similarly, Aslan & Cansever (2009) found out that school administrators do not facilitate creativity because of inadequate communication between parents and school administrators. The participants of the current study also claimed that since school administrators do not care about creative process, they only value end products of activities. According to the participants, the administrators chiefly aim at pleasing parents when those attend the end of year exhibitions.

This situation might be related to school administrators' and parents' lack of knowledge about the value of creativity in young children's development. In fact, because of insufficient knowledge about the importance of creativity, administrators might tend to compare the products generated by students of their school with the products of the students of other schools. They might also compare their teachers' abilities in terms of creativity with the abilities of other schools' teachers. They might perceive parents as a source of income; therefore, they might try to be in good terms with them by showing them attractive products made by their children.

According to another result of this study, the pre-service teachers indicated that if school administrators had in depth

knowledge about early childhood education, they would help teachers to encourage children's creativity.

In addition, according to the study findings, pre-service teachers expressed their concerns about lack of communication between parents and school administrators as well as parents and teachers. They emphasized that if they do not follow the same line in directing children's behaviors, children's creativity could be affected negatively.

Most of pre-service and in-service teachers also pointed out that teachers are capable of dealing with the problems related to school administrators regarding creativity of children. Moreover, they stated that teachers could exhibit bilateral behaviors. That is to say, while they are meeting the requirements of school administrators, they could also prepare and design creative activities for children. However, for some teachers this could be a hard task to attain and they might not know how to deal with this kind of situations. The reason of the way in which both pre-service and in-service teachers think about this issue might be based on their observations and practices in the field of early childhood education. In reality, teachers and teacher candidates might encounter wrong examples of the practices in the field in terms of behaviors or attitudes of administrators regarding creativity. However, they could still expand their skills. Therefore, they have to believe in themselves and try to implement creative activities to affect children's attitudes, thoughts and behaviors concerning creativity. Furthermore, this finding might be related to the participant teachers' beliefs regarding creativity. According to many authors (Pajares, 1992; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997), teachers' beliefs about creativity have

an impact on their perceptions and teaching methods that they implement in their practices. If a teacher has positive beliefs about creativity, s/he might facilitate children's creativity by arranging his/her own classroom environment in order to stimulate children's creativity.

In the study, participants also commented on another possible reason to obscure creativity development of children. Most of the pre-service and in-service teachers said that adult's or societies' strict rules or some obligations which children are forced to undertake might repress their creativity. This finding was parallel to other research results. Cole et al. (1999) and Fleith (2000) stated that relax and free classroom environment in terms of having no strict rules would help children to feel relaxed as well as help them to express themselves freely. In this way, children's creativity might be fostered more successfully. Similarly, Kamyliis, Berke, & Saariluoma (2009) stressed the importance of flexible classroom atmosphere having no strict disciplinary rules; this is found to stimulate many kinds of children's creative characteristics, such as independent thinking and risk taking. When the participants expressed their thoughts about this issue, they also gave examples from their own life.

There was another important finding of the study regarding the obstacles to creativity in early childhood education. Pre-service teachers provided many recommendations to cope with those obstacles. They suggested that parents, school administrators and teachers should always maintain close relationships. This might be a result of the participants' theoretical knowledge gained during undergraduate and

graduate years as well as their experiences in different school settings. In fact, pre-service teachers possessed fresh knowledge about the importance of collaboration with people around children. For example, they took Parent Involvement course as part of compulsory curriculum and they got familiarized with the concept of importance of consistency and interaction between parents and teachers in terms of fostering children's creativity during that course. Furthermore, they had a chance to observe different school administrators and they could understand the difference between poor and good administrators' practices.

5.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

This study suggests that in-service training courses, workshops or seminars might be effective to increase administrators' and teachers' consciousness about the importance of creativity in early years. However, it is known that those kinds of activities do not appeal to school administrators' or parents' attention. Hence, the Ministry of National Education might arrange those kinds of activities compulsory for both school administrators and parents of young children.

Besides, the findings suggest that school administrators who direct and manage teachers should increase their knowledge about the crucial role of creativity in the whole process of children's development through participating in different activities mentioned above. Once they have obtained sufficient knowledge from the official curriculum, they could become a good guide for their teachers and provide valuable recommendations for them related to creativity. To be able to support young children's development, school administrators,

teachers and parents should behave as group members and try to work together for young children's well-being and success.

Additionally, the study findings also suggest that the national early childhood curriculum should be revised. In this revision process, besides to the experts from early childhood education field, there should also be experts from other fields including child development, psychology, sociology, and so forth. With the help of different experts, the curriculum could be extended and more emphasis could be given to development of young children's creativity as well as other areas. Moreover, specific goals and objectives concerning creativity should be stated clearly. At the end of the semester, the teachers might be assessed whether they help children to gain these skills or not. The curriculum might also include some recommendations and activities for parents, school administrators, and teachers to enhance development of creativity. It should be remembered that young children's creativity could not only be supported by the work of one specific group of person; in fact, it depends on the effective collaboration between these three groups of people.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Studies

This study included only one data collecting method which is a type of group interview. Thus, more data should be gathered from classroom observations in both in-service preschool teachers' own classrooms and pre-service preschool teachers' practicum classrooms to obtain more detailed information about the participants' real classroom experiences associated with creativity.

The data for this study was collected by finding out Turkish pre- and in-service preschool teachers' views related to creativity

in early childhood education. Therefore, further studies could be conducted to see similarities and/or differences between Turkish and foreign teachers' views on creativity in early childhood education settings. In addition, conducting cross-cultural studies might be useful to analyze differences between the points of view of the early childhood teachers coming from different cultures.

Last but not least, the current study was conducted with pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers in order to investigate their views on creativity in early childhood education in limited context. Therefore, further studies would be conducted to explore the specific issues about creativity. To illustrate, variety of factors that might affect creativity might be investigated. Moreover, views or beliefs of the experts in early childhood education area might be explored.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions in the Pilot Study

Değerli Okulöncesi Öğretmeni veya Öğretmen Adayı,

Bu mülakat formu sizin okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılık ilgili görüşlerinizi öğrenmek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Sorulara vereceğiniz yanıtlar, araştırma amacıyla kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Adınızı belirtmenize gerek yoktur. Ankete vereceğiniz samimi ve doğru yanıtlar, araştırma bulgularının gerçeğe uygunluk derecesini yükseltecektir. Yardımlarınız için teşekkür ederim.

Simge YILMAZ

ODTÜ –Araştırma Görevlisi

Mülakat Soruları

- 1) Yaratıcılık deyince aklınıza ne/neler gelmektedir?
- 2) Yaratıcılık ile ezbercilik arasında benzerlik ya da karşıtlık anlamında nasıl bir ilişki olduğunu düşünürsünüz?
- 3) Yaratıcı insan özelliklerini sizce nelerdir?
- 4) Bireyin yaratıcılığının ortaya çıkartılmasında toplumsallaşma sürecinin rolü nedir?
- 5) Yaratıcılık, öğretmen ile ilişkilendirilebilecek bir şey midir?
- 6) Sınıf öğretmeni olarak derslerinizde yaratıcılığı gerektiren uygulamalar yapar mısınız?
- 7) Okul yöneticileri derslerinizde yaratıcılığınızı kullanmanızı destekler mi; yoksa engel mi olur?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions in the Main Study

Değerli Okulöncesi Öğretmeni veya Öğretmen Adayı,

Bu mülakat formu sizin okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılık ilgili görüşlerinizi öğrenmek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Sorulara vereceğiniz yanıtlar, araştırma amacıyla kullanılacak ve gizli tutulacaktır. Adınızı belirtmenize gerek yoktur. Ankete vereceğiniz samimi ve doğru yanıtlar, araştırma bulgularının gerçeğe uygunluk derecesini yükseltecektir. Yardımlarınız için teşekkür ederim.

Simge YILMAZ

ODTÜ –Araştırma Görevlisi

Mülakat Soruları

- 1) Yaratıcılık deyince aklınıza genel anlamda ne/neler gelmektedir?
- 2) Yaratıcı insan özelliklerini sizce nelerdir?
- 3) Yaratıcılık ile ezbercilik arasında nasıl bir benzerlik ya da karşıtlık olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
- 4) Bireyin yaratıcılığının ortaya çıkmasında toplumsallaşma sürecinin rolü nedir? Toplumsallaşma sürecinde aile ve öğretmenin çocuğun yaratıcılığını ortaya çıkma sürecindeki rolünden bahsediniz.
- 5) Yaratıcılık, öğretmen ile ilişkilendirilebilecek bir şey midir?
- 6) Okul öncesi eğitimcisi olarak siz eğitim ortamında yaratıcılık gerektiren aktiviteler uygular mısınız? Bu aktiviteleri uyguluyorsanız, lütfen nasıl uyguladığınız konusunda bir örnek veriniz.
- 7) Okul yönetimi sınıf ortamında yaratıcı aktiviteler kullanmanızı destekler mi yoksa engeller mi? Lütfen okul yönetiminin sizin yaratıcı aktiviteleri kullanmanızı konusundaki desteği ya da engeline birer örnek veriniz.

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Bu çalışma, Dr. Refika Olgan ve Arş. Gör. Simge Yılmaz tarafından yürütülen bir çalışmadır. Çalışmanın amacı, katılımcıların okul öncesi eğitimde yaratıcılık hakkındaki görüşlerini incelemektir. Çalışmaya katılım tamamıyla gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Yapılacak uygulamalarda, sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız kesinlikle ve tamamen gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler bilimsel yayımlarda kullanılacaktır.

Uygulamalar, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek soruları içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda uygulamayı yapan kişiye, uygulamaya devam etmek istemediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır. Uygulama sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için İlköğretim Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Dr. Refika Olgan (Oda: 117; Tel: 210 3671; E-posta: rolgan@metu.edu.tr) ya da Araştırma görevlisi Simge Yılmaz (Oda: 109; Tel: 210 4177; E-posta: ysimge@metu.edu.tr ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum. (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih